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Friday
13 Dec. '96

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Gnome

MR TONY Blair's proposal to abolish the hereditary peerage is an appalling blunder.

It is based on a misconception about the nature of hereditary peers, namely that they are all Conservatives and constitute a permanent majority in the upper House for the Conservative Party.

What nonsense! Blair has clearly never met any hereditary peers and I have to tell him that we are an extraordinarily diverse group of individuals. In a sense, we are more representative of the people of this country than either the Life Peers or the members of the House of Commons.

For example, some of us are very wealthy and some of us are slightly less wealthy. Some of us went to major public schools and some of us went to less major ones. Some of us are men and so are the rest of us.

I could go on, but the point is surely made. Why change a system that produces such a huge variety of independent legislators?

Mr Blair's arguments will not wash. Indeed, the only political issue on which I have ever known hereditary peers agree is that Tony Blair is a dangerous Marxist lunatic whose motley band of subversive Trots must not be allowed to mess about with things that do not concern them, ie us.

Hardly a very conservative view!

E. Strobes
pp Lord Gnomebourne
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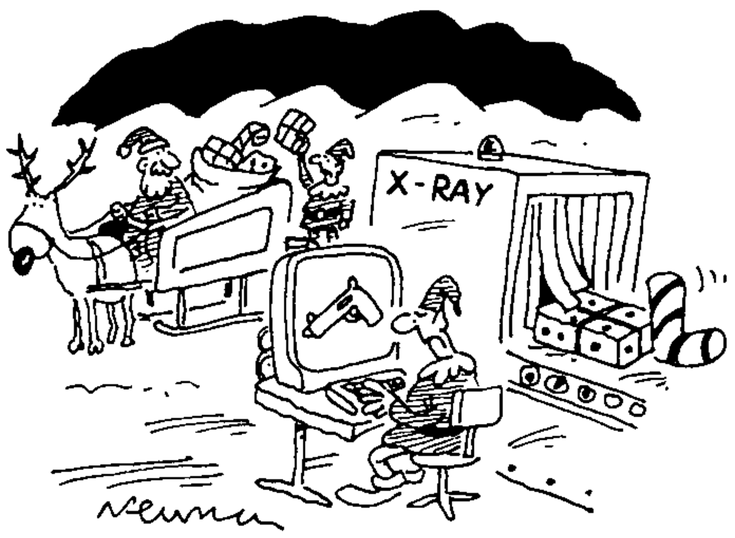

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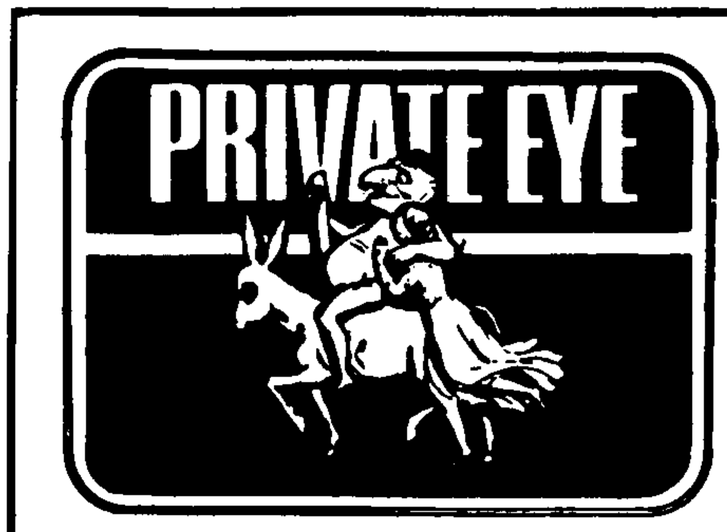

COLOUR SECTION

IN THE TEAROOM

NEARLY all top Tories managed to get their two pennyworth into the great debate on whether to rule out the single currency last week, but one sly old dog forbore to bark.

Ken Clarke had his say on the *Today* programme; Hezza did the *World at One*; Dr Mawhinney's scooters made a fearsome racket on the chancellor's lawn; the PM did a command performance for *On the Record*; George Gardiner got a page of the *Express* to himself... even Terry Dickhead got in on the act — and his views on fudged convergence criteria are about as sophisticated as his views on opera: it's all about a fat Kraut prancing about in a suit.

But what did the man who is supposed to be running our European policy have to say? Why didn't Malcolm Rifkind get in on the act? Because he's too smart, that's why.

The foreign secretary has had his special adviser, Crispin Blunt, quietly preparing to relaunch him as "the true defender of Britain's interests abroad". In the coming days and weeks Rifkind will be presented as the chap who scores real victories over Johnny Foreigner at the conference table while his colleagues squabble ineffectually at home. Once the personal PR bandwagon gets going, there'll be no keeping the garrulous Scottish advocate quiet this side of the election — the Tory leadership election, that is.

'Urquhart'

CAMPAIGNERS to save Barts hospital were surprised by the news that Gerry Green, chief executive of the Royal Hospitals Trust, which includes Barts, is resigning to take over a new private company called Health Care Products Holdings Ltd.

A spokeswoman for the trust told the *Eye* that the new company would "provide health facilities of every kind in Britain and abroad". She said Mr Green had been "involved in setting this up for about a year", and insisted the new company would have nothing to do with the new privately-financed hospital in Whitechapel which will replace Barts.

Though Mr Green's resignation letter chatters on about "the new hospital for which we have all been striving", no one can see how the debt-laden trust and near-bankrupt health authority can possibly find the millions needed to pay its whack on the new hospital. The fear persists that Barts and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the London Chest Hospital will all be closed before the new hospital even gets off the ground.

Meanwhile the government has appointed a new top executive to mastermind its "private finance initiative" in health. He is Robert Osborne, who was special projects director of Tarmac, the firm which benefited most from the privatisation of the former Property Services Agency. News of Mr Osborne's appointment was greeted with delight at the depleted offices of the Royal Hospitals Trust, whose chairman, Sir Derek Boorman, a keen supporter of the closure of Barts, is a former director of Tarmac.

GOVERNMENT plans to make massive savings on war pensions were labelled "shabby and mean-minded" by Labour leader Tony Blair and as "cheap, mean, nasty" by Winston Churchill MP. Fortunately for Major and his critics, MPs parliament can look forward to a much rosier retirement than war pensioners.

In a recent survey of 200 occupational pension schemes by Union Pension Services Ltd, the Parliamentary Pension Scheme was judged far and away the best.

On 10 July this year the Commons voted that MPs whose service in the House ceased after 1 July should be treated as having had a yearly salary of £43,000. This instant backdating of this summer's 26 per cent pay rise secured hefty pensions for the 100-odd members who will "retire" at the next election. MPs with 33 years service may now retire at 60 on pensions worth nearly £30,000 a year, fully protected against inflation for life, with a five-eighths pension for widows and widowers.

MPs' widows receive pensions regardless of the date of marriage, in sharp contrast with the government's treatment of ex-servicemen's widows who receive no pension at all if they were married after their husband's retirement. Will MPs' widows' pensions be slashed by two-thirds if their husbands are found to have died of smoking-related diseases, as has been done to the widows of men who worked on the Burma Railway? Probably not — but then members of parliament don't have cigarettes forced on them in their Red Cross parcels.

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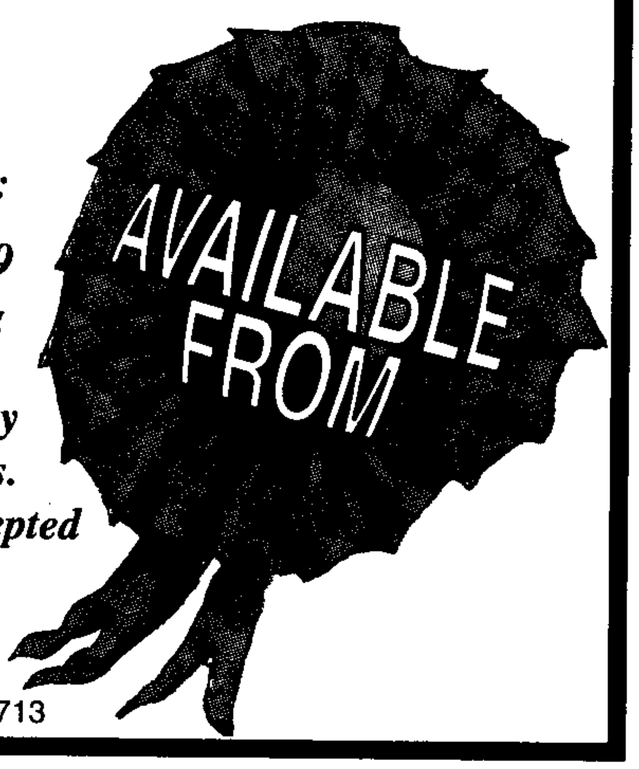

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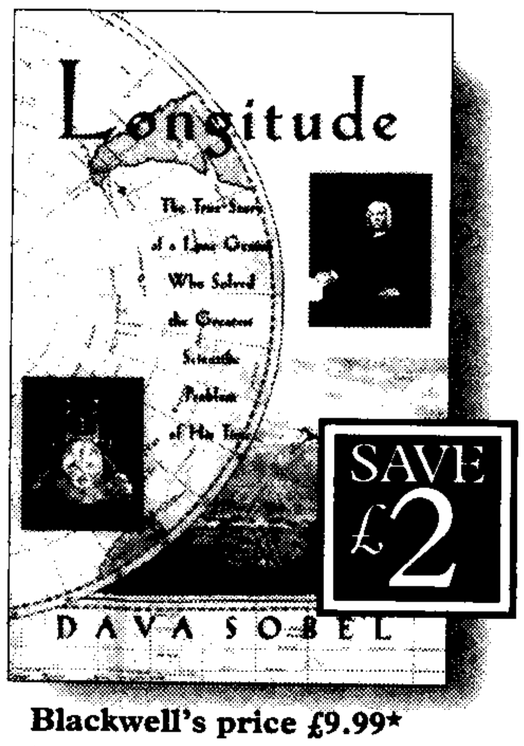

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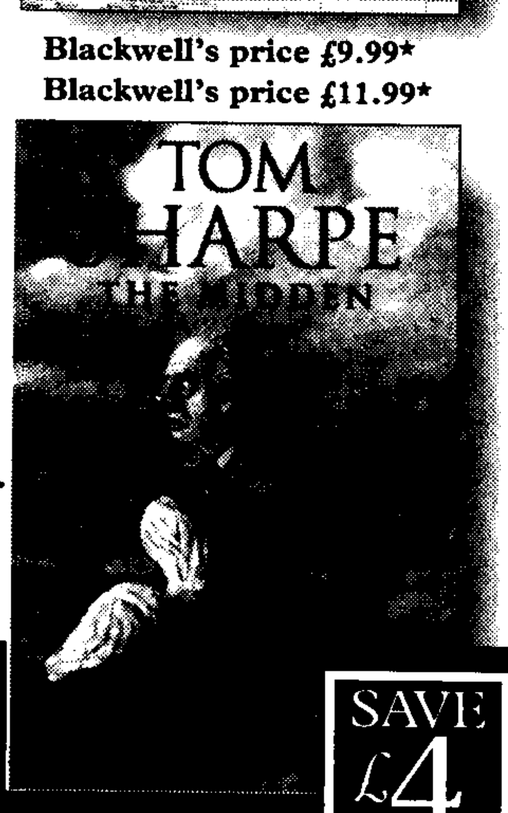

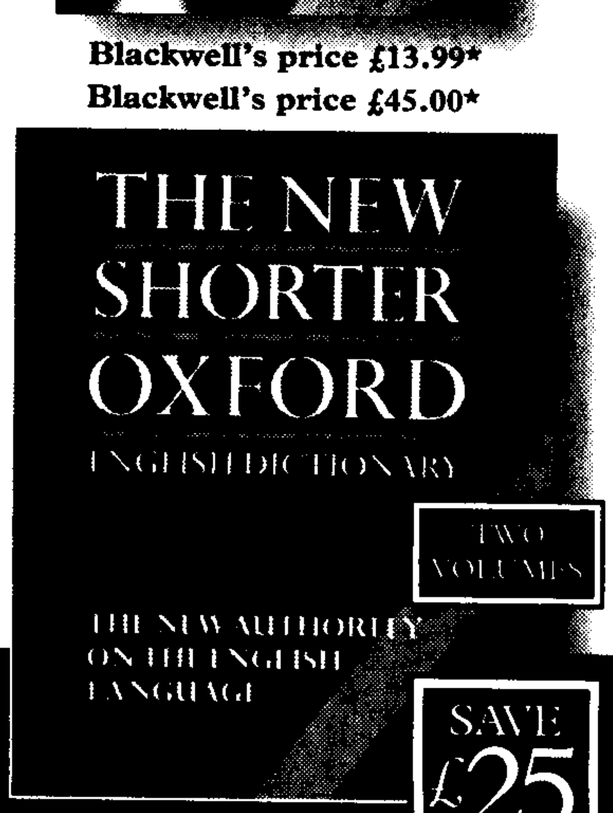

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NEWS

WHAT has happened to the new criminal cases review commission?

Its chairman, prominent Midlands Tory and freemason Sir Frederick Crawford, is sitting in lonely splendour at the commission's spacious new Birmingham offices without any fellow commissioners and without any cases. Cases can only be transferred when the home office's C3 department is finally wound up. This, says the home office, "will be early in the new year".

Applicants for the 15 posts on the new body are still being interviewed. Any applicant who either a) does not vote Tory or b) has ever campaigned against injustice will find the interview hard going.

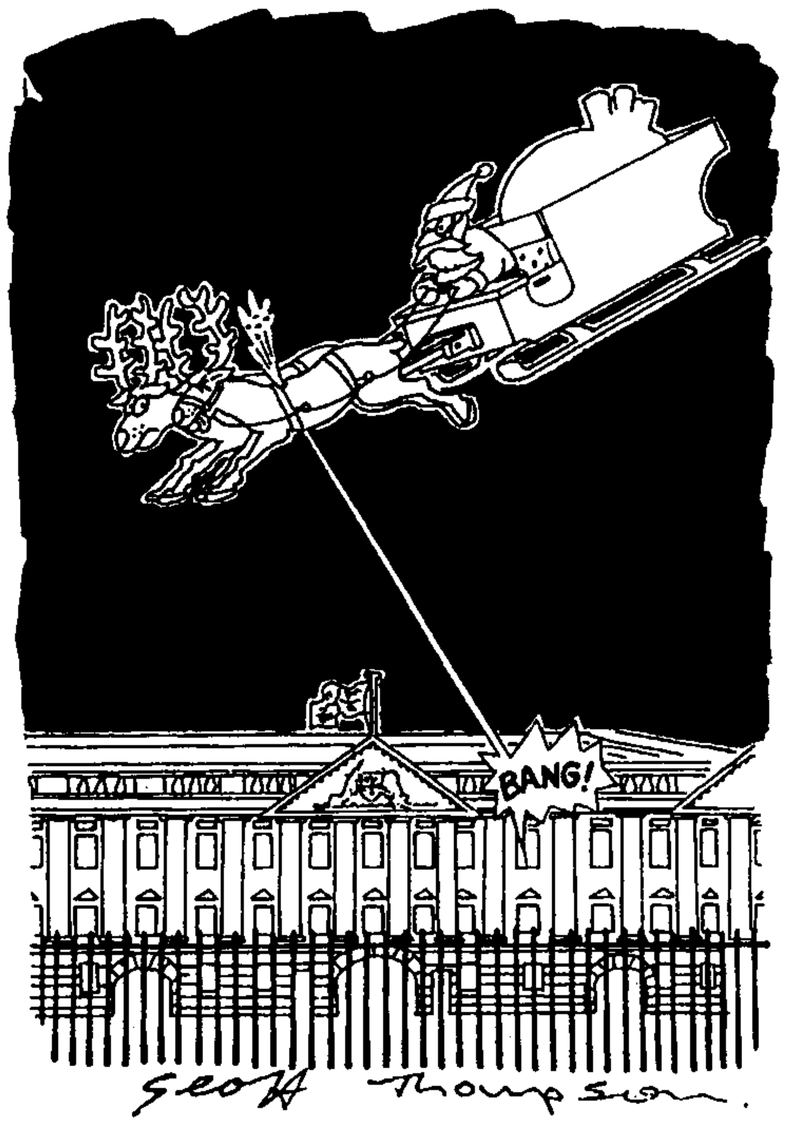
Chris Price, former Labour MP and director of Leeds Polytechnic, campaigned for the Confait brothers whose murder convictions were among the first to be quashed by the court of appeal when their case was sent there by the home secretary. Price is eminently suitable to be a member of the new commission *and he duly applied*. But he is obviously associated with the Labour party and was rejected without even an interview.

Television journalists David Jessel and Steve Phelps were treated in a similar way. Their company, Just Television, campaigns for people who have been wrongly convicted, several of whom have been freed as a result. Other rejectees include Bob Woffinden, who has written a book on miscarriages of justice; and Martin Short, who was ruled out as soon as someone in the home office twigged that he had written a book critical of freemasonry.

PS: C3 aims to dispense with all its cases by the time it hands over to the commission. This means that the most delicate case in hand at the moment, that of the 1961 A6 murder for which James Hanratty was hanged, must be dealt with very soon indeed — probably in that slack week between Christmas and new year when no one is awake.

WHILE the nation commiserated with motorists having to pay an extra 3p tax per litre of fuel, Kenneth Clarke's appalling treatment of bus passengers went unremarked.

In consecutive budgets up to 1993, bus operators were given a rebate on all fuel-tax increases in recognition of the environmental and social importance of their services. Such benefits are of no interest to the present regime, however: the budget imposed a tax rise of about 25 percent on diesel fuel for bus operators. This triggered rises in bus fares — continuing the trend of recent decades of public transport becoming more expensive in real terms while private motoring becomes cheaper.



PAINTINGS and artefacts worth thousands of pounds have been reported missing from Glasgow museums.

An anonymous letter to culture convenor Frank McAveety triggered an inquiry, and auditors later reported: "Items cannot be accounted for and the full extent of the problem is not known."

They had focused on the flagship Kelvingrove Art Galleries, and Museum of Transport, and revealed alarms at a storeroom were turned off because "they were set off by pigeons".

One missing £75,000 sculpture, the superb Papal Cross by 88-year-old American artist George Rickey, was put into storage by... the parks department, but mysteriously disappeared. Two other valuable works of art recovered by Northumberland police in 1994 cannot be traced. Responding to the auditors' report that "many of the inventory records can at best be described as poor", museums director Julian Spalding explained: "One of my top priorities is to improve collections management".

EMPLOYEES at Southern Water are reeling from the news that half of them are to be sacked following the firm's takeover by Scottish Power a few months ago.

Southern became an attractive proposition for Scottish Power in part because of a periodic price review carried out by water regulator Ian Byatt. His review in 1994 allowed Southern to raise its water and sewerage prices by 4 per cent above inflation. This was a far greater increase than any other water company and it angered customers and consumer groups.

When Scottish Power made the bid, however, Byatt made it a condition of the takeover that it would have to reduce the water and sewerage prices of Southern. Scottish Power willingly agreed to a 2 percent cut by April 1997 — a generous offer that still leaves consumers paying far more than pre-1994 prices (even allowing for inflation).

In the three months since Scottish Power took over it has not only made personnel changes. The company has also taken a leaf from Thames Water's book and has been rapidly selling off swathes of water company land, disused treatment works and so on. Despite these lucrative sales more than half Southern's workforce face the sack over the next two years.

ON 9 December the *Sunday Express* made an embarrassingly grovelling court apology to Sean McPhilemy.

In October 1991, McPhilemy's television company, Box Productions, produced for Channel Four's *Dispatches* a programme about a secret conspiracy of top people in Northern Ireland to organise the assassinations of Catholics and republicans. One of the alleged conspirators, a source known as "A", was extensively quoted.

The programme — entitled The Committee — caused an immediate storm. The RUC, some of whose senior officers had been accused of being members of "The Committee", immediately invoked the prevention of terrorism act to force Box and Channel Four to disclose the name of source "A". When both refused they were prosecuted for contempt and, in July 1992, were fined £75,000.

At once the RUC, who had been so desperate to know the source, announced that the whole programme, including the source, had been a hoax. A media smear campaign was launched against McPhilemy and the programme-makers led by the *Sunday Express*.

In a colourful article on 9 August, the *Sunday Express* claimed that McPhilemy had invented a story that he had been intimidated by Protestant paramilitaries and had been forced, as a result, to leave his Oxfordshire home. He was in short a liar.

McPhilemy sued for libel. As the facts emerged during long legal argument, it became clear that McPhilemy's story was entirely true. He *had* had death threats. He *had* left his house. He *had* lived incognito at a secret address. Curtains for the *Express*.

Damages and costs against them came to nearly half a million pounds. Perhaps the most interesting revelation to emerge was that Penrose's most prolific source was a senior officer in the... Royal Ulster Constabulary.

SCOTTISH quango Renfrewshire Enterprise has been criticised for its handling of a £100,000 public relations deal.

After a tendering process for its prestigious Glasgow Airport Initiative account, the quango's preference was for PR outfit Shandwick Scotland. One of Shandwick's account managers is Chris Bell, who is married to Renfrewshire Enterprise's public relations executive Katie Parr. Ms Parr was closely involved in assessing all bids for the PR account, including sitting in on presentations and answering questions.

After complaints about the tendering process from the Scottish office, Greenock's Labour MP Norman Godman and Conservative prospective parliamentary candidate Charles Cormack, an investigation was ordered by the quango itself.

This undoubtedly robust investigation found that in such circumstances staff should not have had access to relevant documents or been part of the decision-making process — but decided that no further action was necessary. So that's all right, then.

TREVVIES*

Perhaps to some people this book is just a collection of photographs taken on the set of a movie.

But to me, it's a testament of the blood, sweat and tears that were shed by many to make this film a reality.

A collective map of many hearts that were squeezed and wrenched, trampled and twisted, and often pushed to breaking point...

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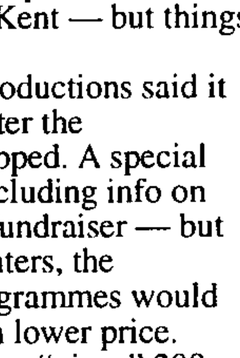
What's important is that we survived. We created something rare and beautiful. Our lives will never be the same.

MADONNA
The Sun



Contributor: Francis Harvey.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

***formerly "Luvvies"**

WHEN the volunteer-run Animal Help Society got fat cat *Cats* producer Cameron Mackintosh to launch its Year of the Cat it hoped to earn big bucks for the charity.

It organised publicity for a gala performance and roped in Princess Michael of Kent — but things soon started to go wrong.

First, Cameron Mackintosh Productions said it was too late to hold a reception after the performance, so the idea was scrapped. A special *Cats* programme was produced including info on the charity. It was to be sold as a fundraiser — but just before the charity paid its printers, the Mackintosh team said its own programmes would still be sold on the night at a much lower price.

The charity thought it was being "given" 200 seats to sell at a premium. It was: but only after it had paid Cameron Mackintosh Productions the ordinary seat price. Now desperate, the charity suggested that a picture by cat artist Mike Margolis, which was jointly owned by Mackintosh and the show's writer, Andrew Lloyd-Webber, could be sold for charity. But the pair refused.

The big night was a sell-out partly thanks to the charity, but the Animal Help Society has only made a few hundred pounds. It is now receiving insulting calls from the production company demanding £2,500 for the seats the charity managed to sell but for which it is still trying to collect the money. The Mackintosh team say if it isn't paid it will complain to the Charity Commissioners.

Turn the page for STREET OF SHAME

Street of Shame

A FEROCIOUS attack on the government of Indonesia appeared on the back page of the *Observer* of 8 December.

In a piece entitled "Making a killing out of Indonesia", columnist Nick Cohen lashed out at "one of the world's premier dictatorships" and mocked the Indonesian government's PR firm Burston Marsteller, its lavish hospitality to London journalists, and its amnesia over the brutal treatment of the people of East Timor.

Shocked readers who shook out the rest of the *Observer* could then relax with a beautifully-produced colour magazine entitled *Perspectives* — 24 expensive pages of lucrative advertising, full of glowing headlines: TROPICAL PARADISE... EMERGING POWERHOUSE... ASIAN DRAGON... ISLAND MAGIC... GATEWAY TO TROPICAL ASIA... RICH HERITAGE AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE... LAND OF A THOUSAND TEMPLES... WORLD OF EXTRAORDINARY SPECTACLE... And so on. No prizes for guessing the country where you could find all this. Indonesia. Oddly, there was no reference to East Timor in this little brochure. Perhaps the *Observer* had made a killing out of it.

MORE redundancies are now certain at the accident-prone *Financial Times*, thanks to a wizard wheeze dreamed up by the newspaper's circulation department.

The suits persuaded chief executive Stephen "Slasher" Hill that it would be a good idea to send faxes to 3,000 company bosses in the UK, encouraging them to subscribe to the pink 'un. The next thing Hill knew, he was being rung by irate executives all over the country, moaning that their fax machines were jammed solid.

Alas! The *FT*'s new automatic faxing software had somehow gone into a "loop" — so the 3,000 potential customers received approximately two million faxes! A conservative estimate of the cost, at 10p a fax, suggests that the cost of the exercise will be about £200,000. So that's either one chief executive sacked, or 10 sub-editors. No prizes for guessing which it'll be.

PERHAPS the most restrained budget commentary appeared in the *Sunset Times*, which gave Tom Murray, described as "the head of KPMG Tax Investigations", plenty of space on its business pages to warn that "tax investigators will swoop on the biggest companies".

Big British companies should be on the alert, he said, as "the investigators will be inquiring into the tax liabilities of large companies, probing international transactions and dealing with cases of tax avoidance and suspected serious fraud".

Murray only named two companies "with low effective tax rates" — Glaxo and Hanson — but he mentioned that "other large multi-nationals, whether British or foreign owned, are suspected by the Revenue of operating aggressive transfer-pricing policies and recent reports, perhaps inspired by the Revenue, suggest that the loss to the exchequer is about £1 billion each year".

It was heart-rending stuff but, apparently, "the next three years will be an expensive and torrid period for many..."

One company that might find life more torrid than most is Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, which managed in its last financial year to pay just £76 million tax on global UK profits of £793 million. UK tax was a reasonable zero on declared profits of £165 million. Murray forgot to mention that, even in passing — a surprising omission given that KPMG has produced a handy tax saving guide for *ST* readers.

PRIVATE I-I-I

A STANDING ovation for Great Thinker Bernard Levin, who invigorates an article about the vanity of Michael Bogdanov with just 44 references to himself (*Times* 22 November).

WHY has dithering *Express* editor Richard Addis handed his (ex-) deputy Ian Monk a £250,000 cheque — even though Michael O'Mara, publisher of Allan Starkie's *Fergie: Her Secret Story*, still wants to see Monk's wife Anita prosecuted for trying to flog a stolen copy to the *Sun*?

Does the pay-off have anything to do with the fact that there were *two* other attempts to steal the book, which the *Daily Mail* was due to serialise?

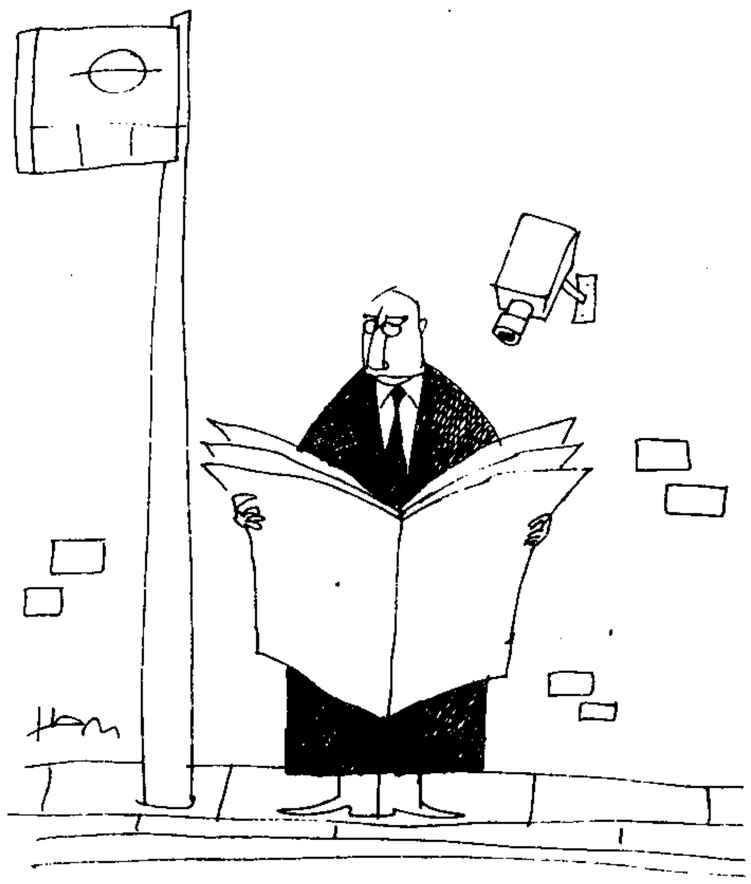
One was at the firm in Finland where Andrew Morton's Diana book was produced (and which the bungling *Express* believed was printing the Starkie effort). The other was at a firm in Reading, also used by O'Mara. But when a motorbike messenger arrived at the Reading plant asking for copies, apparently with the "signatures" of the author and publisher, the manager was suspicious — the book wasn't being published there either.

Such Clouseau-like bungling points to the wretched *Express*. And when the paper's new boss Lord Hollick returned from abroad he told Addis: either Monk is in this "sting" with his wife, in which case he goes without a penny; or he is innocent, and stays. Instead, Monk was paid off with a huge ransom — only weeks after 85 other staff were made redundant. What revelations does Addis fear from the odious Monk?

Monk of course will find the £250,000 very handy. As the *Eye* can reveal, in recent years both he and his wife Anita have been up to their necks in debt, fighting off writs from creditors.

Monk was sued by Barclaycard which issued a writ against him in Northampton county court in 1993 over a bill of £3,470. Three years later he still has an outstanding balance of £2,329. In 1993 he was also pursued by Legal & General over non-payment of insurance premiums, although these may have been paid off by now. Another hefty debt, claimed via Warrington county court, was £3,834 owed to the HFC Bank, although only £722 is still outstanding.

Anita, meanwhile, had a county court judgment brought by Oxfordshire health authority which she has only recently paid off. The couple also recently paid off a £3,646 debt to John Charcol Finance Ltd, a firm of mortgage brokers and financial advisers, after a writ was lodged at Uxbridge county court. They also owe £1,574 to an unknown creditor, according to Lincoln county court.



***SUNSET TIMES* hack Tony Allen-Mills is concerned at the malign influence of American TV chatshows, one of which is facing a multi-million dollar lawsuit following the assassination of a guest.**

"How much longer, after all, [can] any sane viewer bear to watch sordid exhibitionism masquerading as the public interest," reflected the reporter, before assailing the pathetic Jerry Springer hour "shown over here, as are many of the others, on cable television".

Er, not one of the freakshows mentioned is on cable (presumably because the likes of Channel One and Live! are too poor to afford them). All of the "sordid" shows referred to are shown here on Sky — but since no Murdoch paper is in the business of promoting satellite TV it's easy to understand how such slips occur...

SINCE taking charge of the *South China Morning Post*, former *Observer* editor Jonathan Fenby has discovered that the newspaper wars of Hong Kong make Fleet Street look like a kindergarten.

The *Post*, which is controlled by the Malaysian tycoon Robert Kuok, has become embroiled in a nasty spat with the Ma family, owners of Oriental Press Group, which is the publisher of the Chinese mass-circulation *Oriental Daily* and the now-defunct *Eastern Express*.

Mr Ma, it seems, is less than pleased by the *Post*'s frequent news reports about his family's drug-dealing past. To get his own back, Ma's *Oriental Daily* has been carrying detailed accounts of Robert Kuok's business dealings in dodgy Burma — resulting in threats of legal action by Kuok, which Fenby has dutifully printed on the *Post*'s front page.

Now the row is threatening innocent bystanders. In the past few days hacks from *Oriental Daily* have been calling up their counterparts on the *Post*'s business section, inquiring into the past of Fenby's right-hand man, former *FT* hack Ray "Basher" Bashford, who quit London for a huge salary and sumptuous lifestyle on the Peak.

Mr Ma's tireless investigators are particularly keen to discover if, during his *FT* days, Basher took a close and energetic interest in the political economy of Uganda.

BACK in 1993 the *Sun* cheered the nation with an attack on the old pornster Lord Stevens (or "Lord 0898" as the *Sun* called him), who allowed adverts for telephone sex lines to appear in his "newspaper" the *Daily Star*.

The *Sun*'s article appeared after an investigation found links between these services and a rape: "A teenage girl is raped by a self-confessed addict of telephone sexlines. It is an horrific crime which shocks the nation. But what do we do to stop it? NOTHING." (*Sun*, 8 January 93).

Nothing indeed. For despite the *Sun*'s focus on Lord Porn's mucky adverts, the sex lines are still with us. Here's some copy from a recent ad: "They're sexy. They're provocative. They want to hear your most explicit fantasies... Phone the Playboy Hotline now... You'll be up all night." All this accompanied by a sportive picture of scantily clad teenage girls waiting for punters to call. And where was the ad? Er... the *Sun*.

THE increasingly tiresome Petronella "Petsy" Wyatt — now hotly challenging Peter McLie for the title of World's Worst Columnist — has been caught in flagrante.

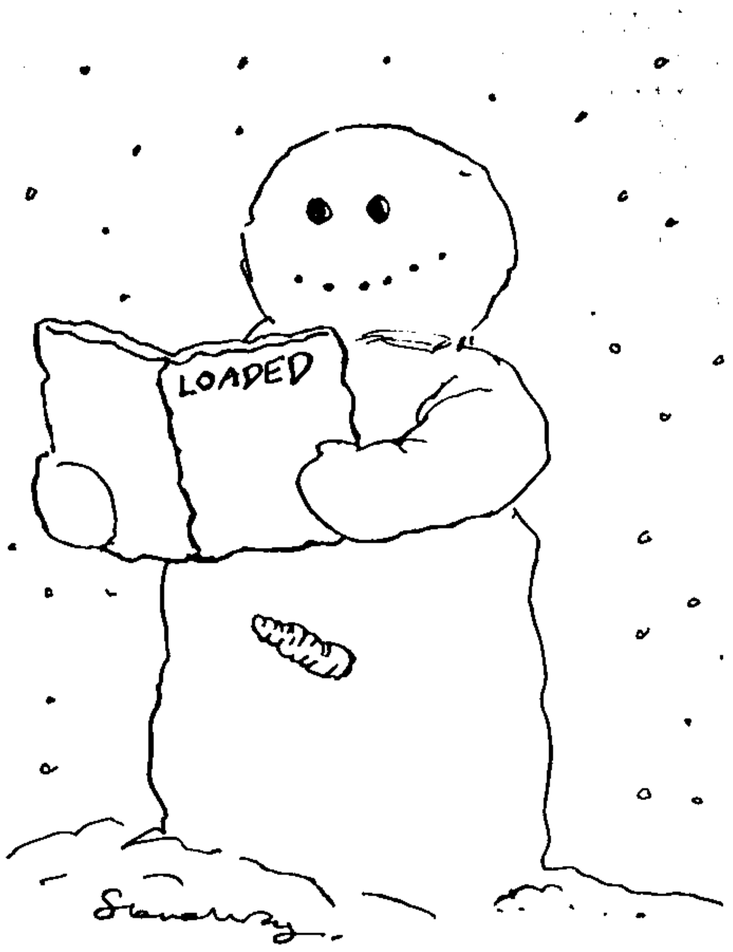
In a *Spectator* essay on "Why fat women should not be made into a magazine issue", published on 9 November, Petsy wrote that "the female body at its best is defective in form. Below the neck at the bow and below the waist astern are two masses that simply refuse to fit into balanced composition. When these masses increase in size, a woman resembles nothing so much as a drunken pound sign."

At least one *Spectator* reader, Tom Hutton, was struck by the extraordinary similarity between la Wyatt's observation and H.L. Mencken's essay on "The Lure of Beauty", first published in 1922 and since anthologised in *The Vintage Mencken*. "The female body," Mencken wrote, "even at its best, is very defective in form. Below the neck at the bow and below the waist astern there are two masses that simply refuse to fit into a balanced composition. Viewed from the side, a woman presents an exaggerated S bisected by an imperfect straight line, and so she inevitably suggests a drunken dollar-mark."

On 19 November Hutton faxed a letter to the *Spectator*, drawing attention to this shameless plagiarism. Oddly enough, *Spectator* editor Frank Johnson — who worships the very ground on which the daintily-shod Petsy walks — has not yet seen fit to publish it.

WHEN the newspapers all reported how Brian Mawhinney, brutish chairman of the Tory party, was trying to oust Kenneth Clarke and spinning the line "No change of chancellor, no chance", it was gratifying to see that they were only six weeks behind the *Eye*.

In early October (*Eye* 908) we disclosed how the witty Mawhinney was amusing colleagues at Tory central office before the party conference with the slogan: "New Chancellor, New Chance."



HOW THEY ARE RELATED

BY FAR the fiercest attack on Labour's plans to exclude hereditary peers from the House of Lords came in a *Daily Telegraph* **leader from its editor Charles Moore.**

Fogeyish Moore strongly reiterated the arguments of Lord Cranborne (a hereditary peer) for leaving the Lords as it is. Even when Moore had to admit that Cranborne's arguments were rather fuzzy, he wisely observed: "Such confusion is probably part of what makes the House of Lords valuable."

Throughout his lengthy leader, Moore failed to mention one fact: that he is a close chum of the applauded Lord Cranborne and a regular visitor to his inherited country seat of Hatfield Park.

A.N. WILSON's review of the new novel by Amanda Craig, *A Vicious Circle*, **was ecstatic. "It is in fact a work of genius," he raved. "The greatest English novelist under the age of 50 has now stepped on to the stage." Even Amanda Craig herself must have been slightly surprised by the hyperbole.**

What provoked this Wilsonian gush? Here, perhaps, is a clue: "It is notorious," he added, "that a rather self-important young journalist thought he was depicted in the villain of the piece... It is curious the way people so often recognise themselves in very unpleasant characters."

The "self-important young journalist" was in fact the ubiquitous critic David Sexton (see *Eyes passim*). Last July, Sexton wrote a damning *Spectator* review of a "lame" and "feeble" novel called *A Watch In The Night* — whose author, funnily enough, was A.N. Wislon. But it would, of course, be quite absurd to suggest that Wilson's extravagant praise for *A Vicious Circle* was mere score-settling.

JANICE TURNER, editor of *That's Life!* **magazine, must be well pleased with the coverage given by the** *Guardian* **last month to her new book of rude jokes for women — or "near-to-the-knuckle chuckles", as she winsomely called them.**

While other newspapers largely ignored this important publishing event, the *Grauniad* thought it merited a lengthy news story. By a strange coincidence, Ms Turner is married to one Ben Preston — who just happens to be the son of the *Grauniad*'s venerable ex-editor, Peter Preston.

HALLO!

THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

THOSE nasty painkillers which precipitated the downfall of Sir Nicholas Scott, MP for Kensington and Chelsea (deselected), have had far more horrific side-effects. Like total amnesia.

Sir Nicholas explained last week that it was not drink which left him face down in the gutter during the Tory party conference — for, at the Irish embassy party he'd only had two glasses of white wine. Actually, it was three — and they were the morning after!

At the embassy hooley, as the Marquesa has already noted, the former minister for the disabled had, in fact, been knocking back whiskies so merrily that when the barman finally tried to close up, one guest protested: "But Sir Nicholas would like another Jameson's!"

Thus the Marquesa was astonished, the morning after, to spot the MP in the Smuggler's Bar at the Bournmouth conference centre in the company of a rather louche hack, Mr William O'Hickey, of the *Express* **— and one was even more astonished to overhear the MP's reply to the query: "How did you get back last night?"**

"I have no idea!" said Sir Nicholas, who then proceeded to drink three glasses of white wine.

The rest, alas, (like Sir Nick) is history.

THANKFULLY dear Ian Botham will soon be able to pay off those huge sums he owes m'learned friends following his unfortunate libel cases with Mr Imran Khan. For I learn that the cricketer and raconteur has been flying out to the Gulf to teach cricket to one of the teenage sons of the richest man in the world, the lovely Sultan of Brunei. Cricket, of course, is traditionally the national sport of this happy desert principality and the witty "Beefy" is payed exactly what he is worth: £20,000 a day.

A fair day's wage, as the sultan says, for a fair day's work!

LORD Archer, silent for too long, once again shares his financial expertise. In *The Galleria*, **a commercial newsletter for cheap buys, the millionaire novelist reveals: "I agree with Woody Allen that there's only one sin and that's to pay retail. I will not buy anything at full price."**

This might help shed light on that mysterious incident at Simpson's store in Toronto in 1975. A man called Jeffrey Archer was arrested by two store detectives, on a connecting bridge between Simpson's and another store, in possession of three suits, worth $700. This Jeffrey Archer, explaining he hadn't realized he'd left Simpson's, was not charged. Lord Archole says it wasn't him; his biographer Michael Crick says it was. Now the great storyteller confesses: "Hilditch & Key, who supply my shirts, ring me at Christmas and say, 'Hello Lord Archer, it's time for the sale. We have put your six blue shirts on one side at half-price. Would you like to collect them?' " Yes please!

AFTER Prince Edward's clever TV documentary *Edward on Edward* in April, how sad the public records office should feel it necessary to release papers which "prove" the Duke of Windsor was a Nazi-sympathizer and that his American totty was negotiating to be styled "Queen of England".

Heavens, Edward felt no need to dwell upon the duke's esteem for Herr Hitler — even though he had access to *all* the archives at Windsor. How very royal!

Not so Edward's lady-friend Sophie Rhys Jones, the PR person who has taken up residence in Buckingham Palace. Last year this gel rather sweetly lent her name to a plucky little charity based in Coventry, Baby Lifeline. But now she has suggested to Baby Lifeline that they should merge with something rather more, well, "high profile". They were not amused at such behaviour.She is not going to turn out like Diana is she ?

THE appetite of Neil "Harrods" Hamilton and his lovely wife Christine for free entertainment, I am delighted to report, remains unsatiated. One was delighted to rub shoulders with this glam and free-spending couple at the champagne launch, in the former minister's Tatton constituency, of a rather pretentious little bistro calling itself "The Restaurant at Bank Square". A delicious meal, rivers of South African wine, no bill.

It must be Christmas!

DESPITE his move to South Africa, Mark Thatcher remains a legend in his own country. Sir Denis Thatcher recently returned from a visit to his son's house in Constantia, Cape Town. "What was it like?" asked his long-standing golf partner and drinking companion, Lord Deedes.

"It was quite extraordinary," replied Sir Denis. "The house must have had at least 20 lavatories."

"Well, that's rather appropriate, don't you think?" snorted his great friend. "After all, he is the biggest shit in Africa."

This unfair remark was clearly not heard by his close friend.

A FRENCH lady telephones in some distress: she had been standing at the end of a taxi queue, when a cab pulled up, with a grey-haired passenger in the back. "I'm going to Knightsbridge," he said, gallantly. "Can I offer you a lift?" Gratefully she accepted and enjoyed the chivalrous attentions of her rescuer. "Know 'oo that was?" said the taxi driver when the journey ended and the gentleman disappeared. "Norman Lamont."

A VILE rumour going around television circles about my sensitive chum Ruby Wax has come to my attention. Fortunately I can scotch the suggestion that she and Johnny "Baldy" Bryan, the Duchess of York's revolting former lover, were ever anything more than friends. Such tittle tattle has arisen because it was apparent from Ruby's charming documentary on La Freebiana that she too had been charmed by the Texan Johnny. But I decided to check with my dear friend Dr Allan Starkie, Freebiana's Boswell, who tells me authoratively: "Johnny does have some parameters! It's true they are friends, and in 1994 Ruby gave a party where Johnny and the duchess were invited — and Ruby **did** seem to be coming on to Johnny.

"The duchess was very jealous and when they got home to Romada Lodge, she was so upset she told Johnny she wanted to expedite her divorce and marry him."

Fortunately Fergie thought better of it it in the morning.

'The Marquesa'

SIR Jammy Fishpaste's plans for world domination continue — his latest foray into the conventional world of British politics being to commission some private polls from well-established MORI.

Goldsmith went for a two-hour meeting with MORI's twinkly American chairman, Bob Worcester. They went over the questions for the three polls and the meeting ended amicably. But only days later, when the MORI people had started to work on the questions, Sir Jams announced that he was unhappy with their phraseology.

The great democrat wanted greater input into the wording of the questions and was clearly not content to leave delicate matters like the impartiality of questions to the experts. Fortunately Worcester was unimpressed by Sir Jams — the man who is, after all, valiantly fighting to put a referendum question to the British people. He stuck to his strict rules and would not allow any changes to his MORI poll's wording.

Worcester remains discreetly silent on the results of Sir Jam's private polls, only commenting that he had "enjoyed working with the Referendum party leader but will not be doing so again". The polls have not been published.

AT THE start of the recent London Conference on Bosnia defence secretary Michael Portillo leant over and whispered conspiratorially to the prime minister: "Have you heard that Madeleine Albright is going to be made US secretary of state?"

Miguel was referring to the Democrat known as Half-Bright by her enemies, and Major's reply was swift: "Hell's teeth", he said.

Could his dismay have anything to do with Albright's fearsome reputation as another Margaret Thatcher? Not only does she look and sound like Thatch, but she has also been nicknamed the Aluminium Lady for being almost as tough as our own ex-Iron Lady: not a pleasant diplomatic prospect for Major, desperate to hang on to the US and Britain's "special relationship".

Unfortunately for Major and Portillo, their exchange of views on Albright was not as private as they had thought. They were already miked up and conference delegates — including a frosty looking US contingent — heard Major's disgust recorded in full.

WHEN chancellor Kenneth Clarke announced his intention to raise the threshold on inheritance tax, Labour frontbenchers not surprisingly saw a good opportunity to have a crack at rich "fat cats".

One of the first to attack the new handout was shadow Scottish secretary George Robertson; while other Labour frontbenchers drew up punchy press releases attacking the "fat cats" and demanding the money instead be spent on more hospital beds and new trains. Imagine their surprise, however, to learn that their planned offensive did not command the support of po-faced Labour press officer Jo Moore.

Robertson and chums were curtly told that since the party would not be opposing fat Ken's tax cuts, there was fat chance of any of their wishlists seeing the light of day. One veteran frontbencher was gobsmacked to hear a secretariat pinstripe volunteer the real reason for "new" Labour's pusillanimity: that the chancellor's tax cut for the super rich "was very popular out there".

MALCOLM MOSS MP, environment minister for Northern Ireland, took part in a disastrous publicity exercise to open the new Newry bypass, which was partly funded by road tax.

As Mr Moss's department is responsible for collecting road tax in Northern Ireland, it was appropriate that the Cambridgeshire North East MP should do the honours. But the English MP did not make a brilliant impression on his Irish cousins — he turned up in a car with an out-of-date tax disc.

IT IS to be hoped that Northern Ireland minister Michael Ancram has a better knowledge of Irish affairs than he has displayed in the past about matters in the Middle East.

When Bassam Shak'a, the mayor of the Palestinian town of Nablus, visited Britain in 1981 to be fitted with artificial limbs after both his legs had been blown off by a car-bomb planted by Israeli terrorists, he visited Dundee. There he was entertained by the municipal authorities, who decided to "twin" their town with Nablus.

Greville Janner MP, who is well-known for his pro-Israel views, referred to Dundee's display of the Palestinian flag as "an anti-semitic outrage" — using the customary logic which assumes that anyone who supports the Palestinians must be anti-semitic. Then Michael Ancram, Tory MP for South Edinburgh, leaped on to this ludicrous bandwagon by declaring that Dundee's councillors were "shaming Scotland with their anti-semitic ravings" — although they had not, in fact, uttered a single anti-semitic word.

PARLIAMENTARY questions by Labour MP John Hutton led the Inland Revenue to reveal that American computer giant EDS has already received £416 million from the Revenue only 30 months into their ten-year contract to introduce tax self-assessment.

The firm is now expected to receive 60 per cent more than its contract price of £1 billion. Part of these extra costs are going on overtime for employees desperately trying to keep the IT work on schedule.

Yet the government is still dishing out contracts to EDS with enthusiasm. A recent parliamentary question by Kevin McNamara revealed that even in a small agency within the ministry of defence, the defence evaluation and research agency, EDS is currently carrying out 135 contracts.

THE disastrous Child Support Agency has had a trial advertising campaign in Greater Manchester — coincidentally the home territory of Rochdale MP Liz Lynne, one of the CSA's most ferocious critics.

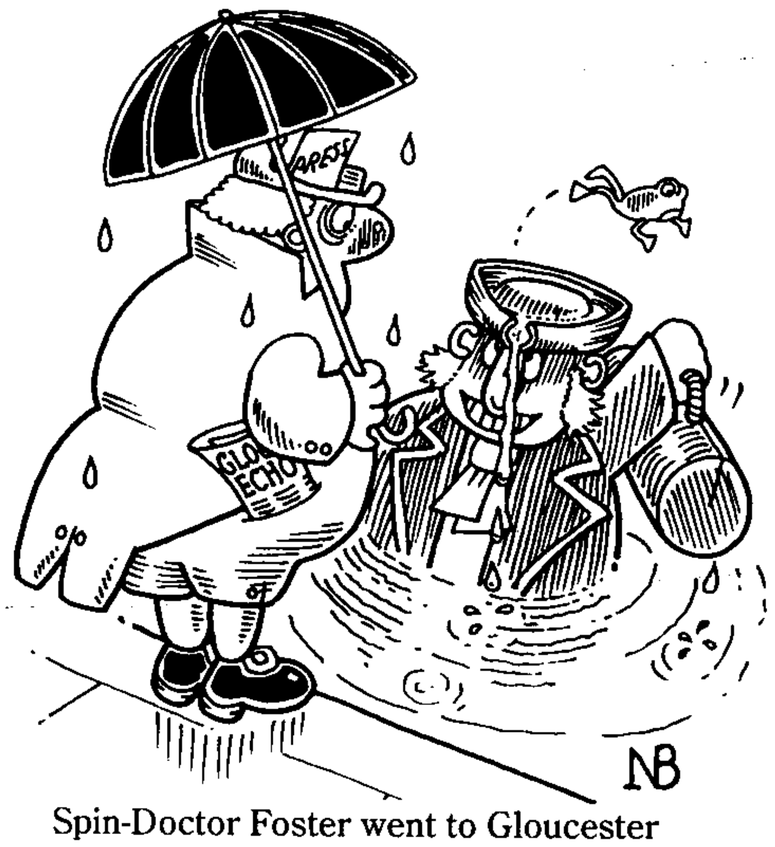
True to form, the campaign has been a disaster.

There have been formal complaints about the wording of the advertisements, which claim: "Even after you pay maintenance you will always have more income if you are in work." This is inaccurate as there have been numerous cases where people in work have been worse off after the intervention of the CSA. Two specific cases were raised in a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority, which agreed the advertisement was inaccurate.

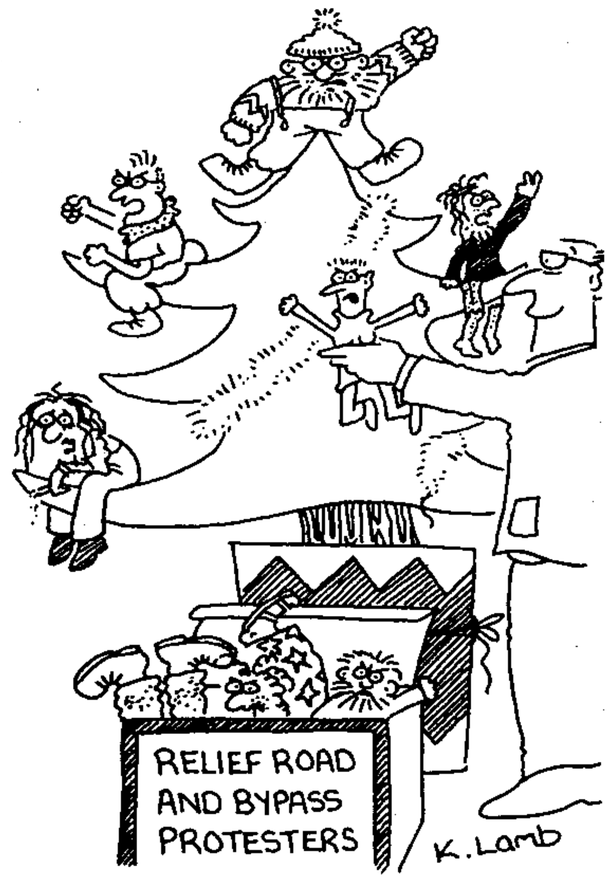
Meanwhile the agency must cover the substantial cost of the campaign — £180,000 — while struggling with a backlog of 350,000 cases.

'Backbiter'

Pre-School Nursery Facility Rhymes



Spin-Doctor Foster went to Gloucester
In a shower of rain.
He stepped in a puddle
Right up to his middle
And then denied it was an error, he
had always intended to do it,
and was not a bit wet.



SIGNAL FAILURES

AS IF travelling on Sundays were not tedious enough under British Rail, the new fragmented railway is landing passengers in all sorts of mess when engineering work is carried out on the tracks.

The new system is proving too complicated to cope with variants to routine services.

When Railtrack worked on the railway between Oxford and Banbury recently, InterCity Cross Country arranged a replacement bus and passed on the details to Railtrack, which is responsible for publicising alternative transport provision. Railtrack told passengers of the bus laid on by Thames Trains for local travellers, but forgot to mention the bus replacing InterCity trains.

Passengers travelling, say, from Oxford to Derby found themselves taking a bus to Banbury and a local train to Birmingham Snow Hill station, then *walking* to Birmingham New Street station to catch their InterCity train northwards — all at the full fare charged for the normal through service from Oxford to Derby.

Faced with such bureaucracy, train operators may follow the lead of North London Railways, which did not bother to provide trains or replacement buses between Camden Road and North Woolwich when Railtrack occupied the tracks on two Sundays in November. Passengers were simply abandoned to navigate their own way using the sparse Sunday public transport of north-west London.

The likelihood of delays due to engineering work increases as Railtrack strives to generate bigger profits. Whereas BR used to train people to work safely on one track between the passage of trains or while the adjacent track was open for trains to pass, Railtrack prefers to close both tracks outright. This is ostensibly to improve safety, yet the number of injuries per 100,000 rail workers jumped by 38 percent in 1995/96. The new arrangement allows Railtrack to save money by using contractors whose labourers need not be versed in the safety rules required for working on an operational railway. It also causes great inconvenience to passengers — but that doesn't bother Railtrack since it's the train operators who bear the brunt of complaints and commercial damage resulting from the disruption.

ALTHOUGH privatisation was meant to trigger a flood of new rolling stock, more passenger trains are on order in Ireland than the UK.

The British and Irish rail systems are similar in many respects, both having histories of underfunding. But the greatest difference is that one is fragmented and privatised while the other is state owned, ordering lots of new trains and upgrading several of its main routes.

Passengers who suffer overcrowding on British trains might like to know that their counterparts on the Dublin to Galway line have a new train of luxury carriages which allows faster and more comfortable journeys. The train was built by British Rail Engineering Ltd, at public expense, 10 years ago. The carriages were ideal for mainland Britain but sat around unused until Irish Rail bought them — another satisfied customer at the British Rail car boot sale.

'Dr B. Ching'

NOOKS and CORNERS

GLASGOW, European City of Culture in 1990 and nominated by the Arts Council to be City of Architecture and Design in 1999, the city where the director of art galleries can screw a large meretricious piece of art junk by Niki de St Phalle to the pediment of the former Royal Exchange, a category "A" listed building, without planning permission or listed building consent (omissions since rectified, of course), is also a city where inconvenient historic buildings miraculously "go on fire" or have to be taken down after years of neglect which seems to be nobody's fault and so can be shrugged off as an Act of God.

The latest victim of these mysterious, irresistible processes is a warehouse of 1876 probably designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson, one of the two architects for whose work Glasgow enjoys an international reputation. Thomson, or his partner Turnbull, designed two blocks of simple, elegant Grecian warehouses for the Glasgow City Improvement Trust in Bell Street and Watson Street near Glasgow Cross — the heart of the medieval city. For years these buildings gently rotted, watched complacently by the city's departments of planning and building control. Rehabilitation of these blocks was one of the keys to the regeneration of Glasgow Cross, but schemes came and went as the buildings changed hands from dubious "developer" to even more dubious developer.

The latest owner of the Bell Street block was a Mr Thomson (no relation) of Federal Securities, who bought it off the liquidators of the previous owning company and who turns out to be a registered bankrupt and is possibly without the means of repairing the building or proceeding with a scheme to convert it into flats without heavy grant aid. So, over the weekend of 1 December, what was long predicted finally happened: building control suddenly decided the condition of the listed building was a danger to the public and began to demolish it (although the owner insists he had complied with all safety requirements and was about to do more).

One down; one to go: for unless something is done the Watson Street block will soon follow, and then Glasgow can have yet another big and useful cleared site for parking cars...

But not, in fact, in this case, because the GAP Housing Association, together with Messrs Wimpey, the house builders, have a scheme in for the contiguous site which runs down to Glasgow Cross. This, designed by the Grey Aitken Partnership of Govan, is of a pretentiousness and mediocrity hard to credit, especially when it is realised that what is required here is simply the completion of a quadrant of grand stone classical facades of the 1920s. This terrible scheme crams 55 flats on the site and has a car park behind, which is difficult to access, while the owner of the Bell Street warehouse said needed a bit more land behind to make *his* scheme work... But this has nothing to do with the sad events in Bell Street the other weekend.

Obviously the council can do nothing to stop such tragic demolitions: compulsory purchase costs money, after all, and money is in very short supply — although it is hard to imagine that long derelict warehouses had much of a market value. Even so, readers may find it incredible that a building attributed to Greek Thomson could still be allowed to disappear today — but, after all, Glasgow is the City of Architecture and Design. So roll on 1999: there will be precious little new architecture worth looking at; but will there be any good old architecture still standing?

I AM rightly taken to task by a reader for my indiscriminate praise of Sir Jocelyn Stevens for writing a letter to try to stop London & Continental Railways being given** carte blanche **to bugger up St Pancras station at the whim of Sir Norman Foster (Eye 912).

In fact, English Heritage willingly acceded to the feeble "Heritage Minimum Requirements" drawn up in 1994 and declined to appear before the Commons select committee on the rail link bill to ensure that such requirements might have some teeth. What happened last month was that the chairman realised English Heritage had ballsed the whole thing up.

Now the bill has sailed through the Lords without amendment. Despite Piranha Teeth's dynamism, deep concern, political acumen and cosy intimacy with the great and good of the Conservative party, he failed to ensure there was a proper debate in the Lords and that a division was called. Under such inspiring leadership, English Heritage has proved to be gutless: all the running was made by the Victorian Society. Poor old St Pancras. Poor old English Heritage. I must be more careful with my compliments in future — especially as Virginia Bottomley has just granted Stevens** three more years **as chairman from next April. How Long, Oh Lord, How Long?

'Piloti'

Rudolph the Brown-Nose Reindeer

LIBRARY NEWS

BRITISH Library chief executive Dr Brian Lang is considering charging an entrance fee of £5. This would be yet another Lang initiative which discourages the general public from the new St Pancras site.

The "new" British Library's appalling neglect of its science collections continues, meanwhile (see *Eyes passim*). Readers have now been told there will be 320 reader desks for science and two other collections at the new site. The present provision for science alone is about 540 seats, and henceforth the collection will occupy less than one tenth of the air conditioned basements in the new building.

Science reference books are classified according to importance from A to E, A being the most important. The 4,000 A-B books are the only ones which will now be kept by the library, and of those, all of which are considered essential to a science reference library, only 1,100 will be at St Pancras. The rest will moved to Yorkshire, from where London readers can order them and expect a wait of two and a half weeks.

This is par for the course for Lang, who was warned by library directors that his sweeping changes were going to "irrevocably damage" collections of international repute.

Pseuds Corner

For Christmas I want a proper day off with no one asking me how things are done — just me floating through green grass, by trees, with a green apple in my pocket. It doesn't have to be summer — an autumn day or a misty winter's day would be fine.

I shall be giving my "somebody special" a Lanner falcon this year. I've already designed the hood and gauntlet.

ANOUSHKA HEMPEL
Financial Times

White truffles aren't subtle or coy or discreet; they're nakedly, snortingly, swaggeringly sexual. There's no getting around it, white truffles are fornication on a plate, and I've been getting a lot of it in the past fortnight. I had it on fried eggs in Harry's Bar, on risotto in Le Caprice and on a wonderful dish of thick cheese soup at Kensington Place. I'll have it on any table, almost anywhere.

A.A. GILL
Sunday Times

I operate between journalism and fiction, so I see both sides of it. I have the capacity to think, well, fuck it, even fiction has to do a job.

WILL SELF
GQ

The Somatization of Archaeology: Institutions, Discourses, Corporeality

This paper examines archaeology's somatization. New conceptualizations of sex and gender in philosophy, anthropology and queer theory are discussed. Current formulations of the body within our discipline, such as the fascination with Foucault and power-based interpretations, are at the expense of human agency and individuality. One way of engaging with the lived body, bypassing existentialism and social constructionism, is to view embodied persons as individuated sites of interface and resolution between the biological, cultural and personal. To illustrate these notions, Egyptian concepts of the body, self and death are explored in a mortuary context at the site of Deir el Medina.

LYNN MESKELL
Norwegian Archaeological Review

The Woman and the Ape is one of the most gripping books I've read in years. It moved me so deeply that by the end I found myself weeping. My animals became concerned, and all the dogs and some of the cats came near to see how I was. My macaw, Rima, quietly walked sideways down the desk to stand on my arm. I showed them the book, and some of them glanced at it briefly. "You're all in here," I told them. "And I am too."

ELIZABETH MARSHALL-THOMAS
Voice

RELATIONSHIP WITH a mature, mostly optimistic, honest man with a view to long term commitment. Someone with a sound understanding of psychology including transpersonal and Jungian. Must be a compassionate person. I am a Neem Karoli Baba devotee. Ram Dass (Richard Alpert inspired). You are perhaps a healer or someone in the "helping" profession. I am 42, an introvert, tall and very sensitive. The wounded healer. Have 2 girls, 17 and 9 years. I spend much time chanting and sitting daily. I live in the South West of England.

Guardian Personal Column

Not long ago, I took advantage of one of the many useful seminars that the BBC runs for its staff. This one was all about *bonding* with one's job and one's colleagues. We each had to write, on a giant piece of paper, what — deep down — we most *wanted* from being at the BBC. I put: "I want to be good, and I want to be happy.£"

ALAN YENTOB
The Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: S. Ballantyne, A. Harrison, A. Dickson, A. James, P. Riddick, M. Carlson, G. Vahramian.

£10 paid for entries

EYE TV

A Room With Two Views (BBC2)

Hillsborough (Granada)

THE news and current affairs boys exercise a power in television quite disproportionate to their audiences, protected by John Birt at the BBC and by the ITC regulators at the commercial channels.

But controllers know the score and so are always looking for different ways of doing current affairs; attempts to get round the problem that factual programming is what people ought to watch, rather than what they do watch. Two such attempts were on view last week.

A Room With Two Views results from the popular 3am empty-restaurant conversation of NCA producers: what about doing away with presenters? Surely, without the tyranny of moderation and interruption, two opinionated people might have a lively and revealing conversation, more like ordinary talk?

Channel 4 tried it a while ago, by locking two antagonists — Matthew Parris and Peter Tatchell, say — in a lift for 28 minutes. Now, late at night on BBC2, *A Room With Two Views* sets two single-issue fanatics at a table, with no overpaid host to hold the ring. A veggie girl and a steak-and-veg chap, for example, discuss food production. Or a seriously-ill woman who wants to die spars on euthanasia with a do-gooder who thinks that all life is sacred. Unwisely, the producer keeps cutting away to an hour-glass, as if to say: not much longer now. With no one to cut through the waffle, correct inaccuracies or steer the argument, the show manages, quite against the odds, to make the case for overpaid hosts.

A more established response to the reluctance of the mass audience to watch serious current affairs shows has been the drama-documentary, in which viewer-friendly actors lead us through a glossy dramatisation of complex events. The latest example — Jimmy McGovern's two-hour **Hillsborough** — came from the pioneers of the drama-doc in Britain, Granada Television.

Only the stone-hearted could have got through this brilliantly emotive and manipulative piece without weeping. But the appalling tragedy of the families should not be allowed to silence the galloping doubts about the drama-doc or "faction" form.

The film began with a solemn white-on-black caption: "Although there have been minor changes to chronology and certain facts have been dramatised to aid clarity, this drama is based entirely on fact, using court transcripts and eye witness reports." A miracle of the lawyer's art, this pompous paragraph is perfectly self-cancelling: this film is all true... except for the bits that aren't.

As Granada and McGovern know perfectly well, all drama is an exercise in bias. Take the casting. Sexy Chris Ecclestone and cuddly Rick Tomlinson as the grieving parents, but robotic Maurice Roeves and android-like Ian McDiarmid as the police chief and coroner. Oddly enough, both Roeves and McDiarmid have played Hitler in the past. Nice one, Jimmy.

Then there's the editing of transcripts. McGovern showed the cops obsessively asking whether fans had been drinking before the match. But was this the only question they asked (as the film suggested) or was it raised as part of a series of questions and a possibly not unreasonable one, given the long history of drink-related disturbances at matches leading up to 1989? Such details matter in a form which boasts of getting to the truth.

Finally, you had to ask what was the point of the project. The drama-doc has been used in the past to settle unfinished business: the Birmingham Six, Lockerbie and so on. But the Hillsborough disaster was impressively addressed by the Taylor Report, which, as far as possible, corrected the errors in football and policing so harrowingly depicted by McGovern. Was it really proper to place the huge talents of McGovern and the resources of ITV behind the questionable case of the Hillsborough families for financial compensation and an understandable but futile desire to stick it to the South Yorkshire police?

In many pre-screening interviews, McGovern taunted the South Yorkshire police: "Come and sue me, if this is wrong." Curiously, though, the writer showed rather less fearlessness towards another of the generally-accepted baddies of the Hillsborough disaster — the *Sun* newspaper.

McGovern resigned as a writer on Brookside because he was prevented from showing one of the fictional Liverpudlians burning the *Sun* in protest at its coverage of the incident, which accused fans of urinating on corpses and looting their pockets. The writer also devoted a whole Cracker story to the anti-*Sun* feeling in the north-west. Yet, in Hillsborough, there was merely a brief scene showing a sympathetic-looking reporter being fed the story by a police officer. And, in a recent *South Bank Show*, McGovern was careful to attribute the urine-and-looting story to a Merseyside news agency.

There's a rumour in telly circles that the production succumbed to pressure from ITV, which receives tens of millions of pounds a year in advertising revenue from the Digger's News International group. But that story may, of course, just be faction.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

THE long-standing needle match between BBC Scotland and the London-based BBC is reaching a new pitch of mutual loathing.

The first sign of intensified cross-border hostility came after Dunblane, when John McCormick, the aggressively ethnic controller of BBC Scotland, publicly criticised the performance of Kate Adie, who had been sent up from London to cover the atrocity.

Now McCormick is plotting his revenge by arranging home-grown coverage of the general election, to be broadcast from Glasgow in an "opt-out" programme. For Scottish viewers, this will replace the Dimblebore-hosted marathon from Television Centre in London.

Tony "Head Prefect" Hall, the severely out-of-depth managing director of BBC news and current affairs, is said to be outraged by the plan, but is powerless to stop it.

McCormick has had little time for London colleagues' political judgment ever since "Head Prefect" insisted, in the teeth of wiser counsels, on commissioning a lengthy interview with John Major on the eve of the Scottish local elections. Labour MPs had to go to the high court to have it postponed.

JOSHUA ROSENBERG, the mild-mannered legal correspondent at BBC television news, was recently obliged to borrow a tie from a corporate press officer because his own neatly-knotted tie was that of the Garrick Club.

The punctilious Rosenberg had suddenly realised that, by showing his Garrick affiliation, he might fall foul of the BBC's rule which orders hacks to dress "neutrally and unobtrusively". Soon afterwards, the BBC's preposterous "economics correspondent" Peter Jay made one of his rare appearances on the box, delivering a self-important "This is what I would do if I were chancellor" item on *Newsnight* — proudly displaying all the while his Garrick Club tie.

YES, LADIES & GENTLEMEN, THERE'S THE LIFETIME'S UNDERACHIEVEMENT...
THE WORST SICKCOM...
AND THE UNFUNNIEST PERFORMANCE OF THE YEAR...
THE BRITISH COMEDY AWARDS
Ken Pyne

VIEWERS of the BBC's sports personality of the year yawn should not be fooled by the smooth production and bland presenters: the family event has been racked with difficulties.

A number of naughty students decided to flood the competition's offices with e-mail votes for Justin Fashanu, the footballer famous for being John Fashanu's gay brother, but not for being a great sporting personality. This would not only have been a jolly good wheeze, but also a chance to make a fast buck: bookies were quoting very long odds for Justin winning the event.

The internet pranksters were discovered, however, and the BBC sport office has been diligently deleting their entries ever since.

Meanwhile, thousands of disgruntled anglers across the country have been asking why their persistent voting never ever results in prizes. Every year anglers (who represent the country's largest participation sport) send off their votes for world champion match angler Bob Nudd. But as the majority of the country has never heard of Bob Nudd, the fishing fanatics suspect their votes are being quietly sidelined along with Mr Fashanu's to make way for more populist sportsmen like Steve Redgrave or Alan Shearer. Surely this can't be true?

QUANGO watchers were interested to note how an independent panel has refused to reappoint Welsh businessman Gwyn Jones as chairman of BBC Wales and a governor of the BBC.

When the quango king chaired the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) he used his position as a BBC governor to criticise Cardiff BBC hacks and castigate them for investigating a dodgy land deal involving the WDA and Tesco (on whose board Jones also served).

Curiously, *Wales Today*, the BBC's main Welsh news programme, ignored the story, while rival HTV gleefully led its main bulletin with it. Beeb watchers continue to spread disgraceful rumours that the BBC's Welsh-speaking Taffia sets a news agenda in favour of its own kith and kin. Perish the thought.

WHAT exactly does Alan Yentob *do*? The question has been puzzling BBC staff ever since he was given the ill-defined job of "Director of Programmes" in the last-but-one Birtian reorganisation.

Still, the devil finds work for idle hands — as BBC TV's head of music, Avril McRory, discovered a few weeks ago when Botney summoned her to his office. "I'm thinking of reorganising the music side," he announced. "So I'm advertising your job. Would you like to apply for it?"

Suppressing the urge to shake him vigorously by the beard, McRory duly agreed to be interviewed for the non-vacancy. After 15 minutes of desultory chat, Yentob brought the meeting to an end. "Well, that went quite well," he commented encouragingly. "By the way, is there anyone else you can think of who might be a suitable candidate?"

McRory's reply consisted of two words, one of which had four letters beginning musically with an "F" sharp. Rather shaken by this expletive eruption, Botney hastily reappointed McRory as head of music at BBC television.

End of story? Not quite. As part of its permanent revolution, the BBC has also created a new post — "head of classical music". The first incumbent, Roger Wright, is supposed to have "multi-media" responsibilities for all classical music on Radio 3, Radio 2, the World Service and BBC television, as well as running the BBC orchestras.

Suppose, then, that BBC2 decides to broadcast a concert by the Berlin Philharmonic. Will this be supervised by McRory, as head of all music on television, or Roger Wright, as head of all classical music on the BBC? Nobody seems to know.

HACKWATCH: MARY RIDDELL

WHEN Robert Maxwell was buried on the Mount of Olives, the *Daily Mirror* naturally wished to give the great man a decent send-off. And so it despatched its most reliably vacuous hackette, Mary Riddell, to do the honours. She did not disappoint.

"From the streets of Jerusalem, well-wishers flocked in — some in business suits, some in cardigans and anoraks," she reported. "Robert Maxwell would have welcomed them as his wife did, because behind the glittering career — the yacht, the Rolls-Royces, the gloss and glory and affluence — lay his unswerving crusade to better the lot of the ordinary man."

In spite of this Cap'n Bob-shaped blot on her copybook, Riddell has now been reincarnated as the Voice of Morality in the *New Statesman*, where she pontificates weekly — and indeed weakly, to judge by her platitudinous output so far...

21 June: "I live in the same catchment area as [Tony] Blair," Mary reveals, "and I have also opted out. My sons now go to private schools. I shall not bore you with the reasons why, since you will have heard identical ones at a million inner-city dinner parties." Nevertheless, she still believes that "a decent education is not a saleable commodity".

28 June: As the Archbishop of Canterbury bemoans the fall in church attendance, Mary bares her soul. "Me? I am an agnostic," she declares, fence-sitting as usual. "I have sympathy with the aims of positive Christianity. It is the negative message of doom that is so depressing."

12 July: Ted Heath's 80th birthday is the peg for some profound thoughts about the aged. "Super-oldies must be indulged, or — if they are doing a particularly splendid job — venerated beyond all reason," she grumbles, referring to Barbara Cartland, Nelson Mandela and the Queen Mother. Still, on the other hand, "we do have much to learn from the wisdom of the old."

19 July: A bomb goes off in Northern Ireland. "Still there is hope," Mary reassures us. For, she reveals dramatically, there are many people in Northern Ireland who "share an equal longing to live in peace".

16 August: Mandy Allwood, pregnant with octuplets, has sold her story to the *News of the World* — thus provoking an orgy of tut-tutting from every Glenda Slagg in Fleet Street about "putting a price on human life". As ever, Mary dares to be different. "What price a human life?" she wonders.

23 August: Now that the royal family's Way Ahead group is discussing possible reforms, Mary comes up with a radical proposal of her own. *New Statesman* readers may be shocked, but she goes right ahead and says it: "Abolishing male primogeniture is long overdue." Phew.

30 August: The sun may be shining, but it's raining in Mary's long-suffering heart. "August always is the cruellest month," she laments. "This summer, like every other, has produced a litany of holiday tragedy." A British teenager has been murdered in France; a brother and sister have drowned on a Norfolk beach. Brooding mournfully on "the plight of children here and abroad", Mary concludes that "there is work to be done on many levels".

6 September: Party leaders' wives are being used as the new secret weapon in the battle for female votes. But is this enough? "Although women voters welcome more engaging politics," Mary discloses, "they want substance rather than style." Fancy!

13 September: As if it weren't enough to carry the cares of the world on her shoulders, Mary has a domestic tragedy to cope with: her son was given the TV tie-in book of *Men Behaving Badly* for his birthday. She is shocked. "I am (and do call me old-fashioned)... concerned about a society which agonises over the right to smack children while happily sanctioning the peddling of juvenile pornography for pocket-money."

20 September: The case of the bonking Bishop of Argyll turns Mary's thoughts to the question of priestly celibacy. Cardinal Hume is "a prayerful and contemplative man"; but on the other hand he may just possibly be wrong in treating sexual abstinence as the only yardstick of goodness. "Honesty, integrity and spirituality" — these, she fearlessly suggests, are all fine qualities as well.

11 October: Mary, bless her heart, has been pondering the needs of children. Perceptive as ever, she has noticed that when parents divorce the courts usually award custody to the mother. "Is this a bad thing? Not really... Reasonable settlements are achievable only by reasonable parents capable of putting children first." So now we know.

25 October: The moral manifesto issued by Frances Lawrence, the widow of a murdered headmaster, gives Mary the perfect opportunity to display her on-the-one-hand-on-the-other technique. Frances Lawrence is "a woman of integrity and fortitude", whose "dignified sorrow evoked all the natural emotions: grief, sympathy, admiration". However, "politicians cannot dictate morality to the individual, and they should not try." The real answer is better education. "Will morality classes really help in its revival?" Mary thinks not.

1 November: Time for a gentle U-turn: "The move towards morality in the curriculum cannot come too soon." But only in moderation, of course, since "this is no time for zealotry." Her attitude to the burning question of home-school contracts is similarly judicious: "Of course, parents are greatly responsible for their children's conduct, but contractual obligations are no substitute for dialogue between home and school." Who would have thought it?

8 November: Several pundits have criticised Jon Snow for writing about his coolness towards his mother. "In condemning Snow they all thought his fixation with his mother's baldness to be gratuitous cruelty," Mary comments. "It seemed to me that her wig was merely a metaphor for the falsities pervading a seemingly perfect family." So what should we conclude? Hard to say. "There is no moral here, except that real lives and the causes of spiritual deprivation do not always conform to popular waffle." Ah yes.

22 November: Surveying the new edition of *British Social Attitudes*, Mary is in gloomy mood. "There is no feelgood factor anywhere. No perception of social fairness." It gets worse: "We do not send birthday cards to distant uncles. We do not value best friends as much as we used to." What are the solutions? Mary can't say, but she feels "there is plenty here for Tony Blair to study."

6 December: Chris Smith has published Labour's blueprint for reforming the NHS. "This sounds fine," she agrees. "But, Smith's critics will ask, is it merely an exercise in deckchair rearrangement?" She isn't sure. "While Smith's plans are an imaginative first step, they lack clarity and detail. To some extent that is a necessary flaw at this stage." Clear?

QUENTIN TARANTINYTIM

"Stuff your fucking charity!"

DOING THE ROUNDS

A SURVEY by independent performance analysts CHKS Ltd has found that, in the last three years, there has been an 8 percent fall in the length of hospital stay for patients undergoing hip and other major joint replacements.

Early discharge is good news for hospital accountants, but what about the patients? The survey found "a clear increase" in the mortality rates linked to these operations over the same period. Could the two be related by any chance, and if so will we be told?

● ON 26 November Charles Marshall, chief executive of **University College London Hospitals**, sent an illuminating memo to Sandra Knowles, general manager of the surgical division.

"As you know, we are already seeing considerable pressure on beds, with some examples of unacceptably long waits on trolleys in A&E.

"It seems to me that it would be prudent for us to plan some reduction in our elective admissions during January and February in order to ensure we do not find ourselves with the worst of both worlds i.e. long waits in A&E and increased numbers of last minute cancellations.

"I should therefore be grateful if you would, by December 8, let me have a note of how you would effect a 10% and a 20% reduction in elective admissions during January and February. Clearly you would wish to target any such reductions on areas in which the effect on our financial position or on our ability to meet waiting time targets could be minimised. Nonetheless, we must make the provision of capacity for acute medicine and surgery a priority."

● ALL IS not well with the ear, nose and throat service at **Cambridge's Adenbrooke's hospital**. On 29 October, consultant ENT surgeons Moffat, Gray and Ellis sent the following letter to all local GPs.

"We are writing to explain the steps we are forced to take to resolve critical problems of overload in ENT clinics. This has led to large numbers of appointments being cancelled with the consequent distress to patients and complaints to their GPs, together with ever lengthening waits for routine appointments... A moratorium will now be placed on the issue of new outpatient appointments for routine referrals, which will be held for action in January 1997... We are sorry to take these steps but it is essential to create a sufficient pause to allow **Cambridge and Huntingdon health authority** to consider proper funding of our service in future."

Attached to the letter are helpful statistics outlining the extent of the problem. The wait for a routine appointment for Mr Ellis is currently 86 weeks, for Mr Moffat 80 weeks and for Mr Gray a mere 60 weeks. Four hundred and eighty seven new patients per month are referred to the department, which can only cope with 350, making an annual unfunded surplus of 1,644 patients. Each consultant caters for a catchment population of 210,000 compared to a national average of 100,000 in the UK — or 20,000 in France and 10,000 in Denmark. Still, it can't be all doom and gloom for our happy trio of ENT specialists. Presumably some of the patients who get hacked off waiting 18 months for an appointment decide to go private...

● AT **Bath's Royal United hospital**, a consultant physician on emergency duty was eventually tracked down to Beijing. Apparently, he'd gone off to a conference and forgotten to swap the duty rota. That's his story, anyway. The junior staff who had to cope with up to 40 emergency admissions in a busy 24 hours were less than amused.

● THE latest National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Deaths has revealed a lack of daytime operating theatres, inadequate provision of critical care services for orthopaedic surgery patients, continuing poor communication between health professionals and a lack of audit. Nothing new there, then.

Audit is most valuable when done covertly, since prior warning allows whoever's being audited to put in that extra push. At **Norwich NHS trust**, consultant surgeons were audited without their knowledge for their ability to perform laprascopic gall bladder removals and their subsequent complication rates were measured. Two surgeons were very good, one was satisfactory and one wasn't. Alas, the results won't ever be published and neither patients or GPs will have access to this information, so it's left to the trust management and the surgeons themselves to sought the problem out. But can they be trusted to do it?

● THE future of **London's Barts hospital** hangs in the balance, but its minor injury unit — which replaced its major casualty unit — looks certain to suffer a hushed-up death in the not too distant future. Meanwhile, **Newham hospital** is desperately short of anaesthetists, with just two currently sharing the workload.

"You've got something extremely rare, Mr Watson — a hospital bed"

● HEALTH service commissioner Sir William Reid, who has the enviable task of sifting through the neverending flood of complaints against the NHS, has come up with a clear winner. Since 1994, he's investigated more complaints against **Redbridge health care trust** than any other in England, Scotland or Wales.

● RAY ROWDEN, director of the **department of health**'s high security psychiatric services commissioning board, has described some of the services as "appalling" and that mental health service commissioning is "fumbling in the dark." Laudable sentiments and no doubt true, but with an election coming up the DoH may feel a bit of gentle gagging is in order.

The government may also wish to hush up details of its fab new £79.7 million Quarry House NHS management headquarters in **Leeds** (*Eyes passim*) which has been built too small. Neither the construction firm Norwest Holst nor the departments of health and social security spotted the "space shortfall" in time to do anything about it. The government has decided against suing Norwest Holst because it wanted to cram staff into the building as quickly as possible.

M.D.

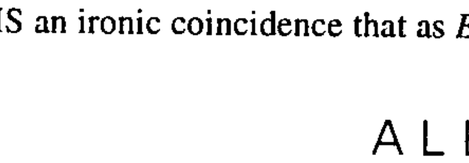
DOWN ON THE FARM

ONE of the reasons given for the explosive increase in *E coli* 0157 food poisoning — which has increased from nowhere in the early 1980s to more than 1,000 cases last year — is that too little has been devoted to researching this new and deadly phenomenon.

The main reason for the lack of funding is that so much is being siphoned off to research the hitherto more fashionable BSE/CJD link. But, given that *E coli* "is presenting a far more substantial threat than the numerically insignificant 'new strain' CJD" (*Eye* 904), the government must now regret having taken its eye off the ball.

It is devoting £4.2 million to immediate BSE/CJD research. But, even if the link between eating BSE-infected beef and CJD were proven, and it has not been yet, BSE/CJD has been responsible for 14 deaths whereas *E coli* 0157, in the same period, has caused *more than 100 fatalities*.

Even more embarrassing is the little advertised fact that, of the 14 "new strain" CJD cases so far reported since Stephen Dorrell's unfortunate outburst in March, all have had an onset in 1994 or 1995. In other words, there have been *no* cases of this "new" disease reported this year. Yet, in only one *E coli* outbreak in Scotland this year, nine elderly people have died.



IT IS an ironic coincidence that as *E coli* 0157 food poisoning sweeps Lanarkshire — it has now killed nine and made hundreds seriously ill — the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS), the "disease detective" that is supposed to control such outbreaks, this year celebrates its golden jubilee.

Launched in 1946, the service is looking forward to another 50 years of "protecting the population from infection" — not least, one assumes, from the terrors of *E coli* food poisoning. Fortunately for the PHLS, the Lanarkshire outbreak occurred in Scotland where its remit does not hold. This means that it can absolve itself from any direct responsibility for failing to prevent one of the biggest and most serious food-poisoning disasters in modern times.

That accolade now goes to Lanarkshire health board officials who, along with Clydesdale environmental health officers, frittered away £500,000 on persecuting Humphrey Errington, producer of Lanark Blue cheese (*Eyes passim*).

What is emerging from the Lanarkshire incident is that *E coli*, hitherto associated with undercooked burgers, seems to have changed tack and is now infecting a wider range of foods, including cooked meat. Had the Scottish authorities been aware of this problem they might have devoted more time to inspecting their butchers and the outbreak might have been prevented.

Enter the PHLS: it now appears there was a previous cooked meat *E coli* outbreak, centred on a Sunderland butcher in August last year. But so concerned were the authorities at the possible public reaction — when the government was still trying to calm fears on BSE — that details were kept secret. Thus the PHLS, whose main task is to warn of developing trends in food poisoning, kept silent.

Old Macdonald

ALBERT

MORE BLOODY BRUSSLES LEGISLATION FOR LIVESTOCK DRIVERS!
IVE GOT TO STOP EVERY FIVE HOURS NOW FOR A REST AN' A CUP OF TEA!
FORM 641/97
BE BLEEDIN' THURSDAY BEFORE I LEAVE WAKEFIELD
SUZI
2nd floor

'New Muckspreader'

THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

Friday, 13 December 1996

HITTING THE ROOF...

A PITIFUL tale of greed and bungling has emerged from Sandwell, the most poverty-stricken borough in the West Midlands.

Fourteen years ago its housing committee, faced with 3,000 council homes with leaking roofs, wanted to launch a repair programme but did not have the money to do it properly. Rather than install new roofs, it decided to spread plastic sealant over the crumbling tiles.

Senior housing officers went to find a decent contractor and came back with BDG Roof Bond Ltd, run by a Mr Ken Douglas. For the next ten years BDG made itself a pretty penny spreading its plastic sealant across the roofs of 2,000 of Sandwell's homes and some schools. Then in 1992 it went bust.

This coincided with an investigation in neighbouring Dudley which found that £130,000 had been paid to roofing contractors for work they had not done. The payments had been invoiced by contractors and approved by Dudley council officers — of whom one was later sacked, another demoted and three others forced into early retirement after being charged with gross misconduct. When Dudley tried to recover the money it found the contractor had gone bust. Its name? BDG Roof Bond.

Back in Sandwell it did not take long for housing officers to find a replacement for BDG: Roof Bond Roof Restoration, a Cardiff-based firm headed by... Mr Ken Douglas. Strangely, the contract never went to tender, despite being worth millions. Equally strangely, Douglas was confirmed on Sandwell's select list of contractors in 1993, even though his involvement with a liquidated company should have disqualified him.

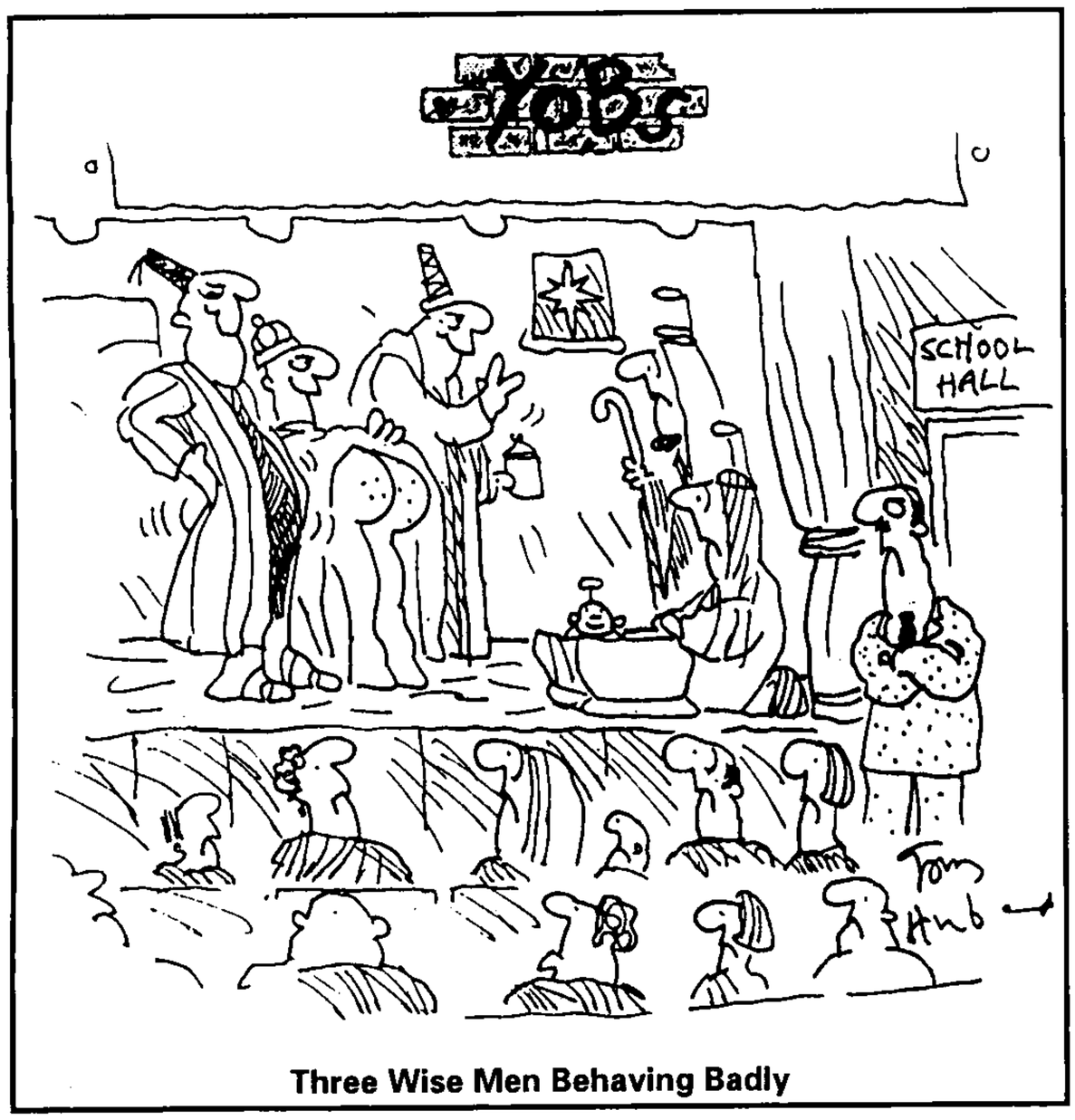
When dozy hacks at the local rag, the *Express & Star*, stumbled across the story they rang the housing department. Within days housing director Jed Lucas had suspended three of the officers who supervise outside contractors. Derek Still, David Brownsword and Kevin Yardley were variously alleged to have had their own roofs sealed using Douglas's special compound and of accepting a few too many of his unofficial Christmas bonuses. A number of other, unnamed, officers are understood to have had their own roofs specially treated too.

An investigation is now under way — especially into why Sandwell paid Douglas an average of £700 per roof when he was offering the same service to other authorities for about £400. But any officer who took the roof sealing rather than the bonuses may have lost out. It seems Douglas's magic sealant, instead of using a silicone-based compound which can last for two decades or more, uses neoprene, which breaks down in sunlight within a few years.

Housing director Lucas has managed to protect tenants whose homes were treated by Douglas from unnecessary panic... by stifling all publicity. He called his friends at the *Express & Star*, whose editor Warren Wilson was reminded that Sandwell was one of the rag's biggest advertisers. The story never appeared and Sandwell tenants will be none the wiser — until the rain comes in again.

JUNKET OF THE WEEK

WHAT does Labour-dominated Bedfordshire get for the £4,100 it pays each year to belong to the Assembly of European Regions, a powerless quango which is not even formally recognised by the EU? Er, it gets the chance to spend even more – £20,000 this year – sending senior councillors on Euro junkets. Tory group leader Philip Hendry, Labour's John Tizard and Liberal Democrat group leader Nick Hills made 20 trips between them in 18 months. Hills recently went to Portugal for a conference on... wild birds. The council says membership has brought contracts worth £6m to Bedfordshire, but it is hard "to break these things down into pounds, shillings or pence".



Three Wise Men Behaving Badly

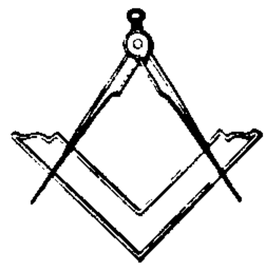
FRANK TALKING

THERE were heated exchanges over the airwaves in Liverpool recently when Labour leader Frank Prendergast went on radio to defend the city council's cheapskate policy on war pensions.

Liverpool is one of only two councils in the country which takes war pensions into account when processing housing benefit claims (the other is Manchester). But when his Lib-Dem opponent, Coun Flo Clucas, suggested this was a "betrayal" of Liverpudlian war veterans and that her party's alternative budget would have kept their pensions out of benefit calculations, Prendergast went ballistic and branded her a "liar".

Such yobbish antics might be fine in the council chamber where only a few people are listening, but given that a much wider radio audience had heard such defamatory remarks, Clucas was miffed and went straight to Messrs Sue, Grabbit & Runne.

ON THE SQUARE



CONTROVERSY at Castle Point borough council, Southend, where the ombudsman has criticised councillors' masonic links and found the council itself guilty of maladministration.

Several Tory councillors were reprimanded in the report for not declaring their masonic links when considering a planning application for a major development at Oysterfleet on Canvey Island. A number of the site developers were freemasons, and former councillors Bill Sharp and Ron Sweeting, who sat on the committee considering the application, were also freemasons. They failed to declare their links, as did another committee member whose husband was a freemason.

Sharp, who said the complaints were politically motivated, is no stranger to public criticism. He was admonished by the council's chief auditor along with fellow Tory councillor Malcolm Banagan after a contract to install automatic toilets was not put out to tender but went to the pair's company, DWM Services. Only a few years earlier Sharp sat on the recreation and amenities committee — which granted him a 25-year lease to use council land as a golf range. Nearly all the other leases were granted annually (see *Eye* 891).

IN BRIEF

LAMBETH: The council has given confidential personal data, including disciplinary and sickness records, on 2,000 staff to three private firms competing for a ten-year, £350m series of cleaning contracts. The staff face pay cuts and poorer conditions if "privatised". Many now threaten court action against Lambeth under the data protection act.

FALKIRK: Labour councillor Tam O'Dea has resigned from the equal opportunities committee after being banned from his British Legion club for calling a fellow member a "Fenian bastard" and claiming to be the "greatest Protestant in Grangemouth". He claims he has nothing against Catholics but is "proud to be a member of the Orange Lodge" — not known for giving equal opportunities to Catholics.

HULL: Labour councillor Angie Butler has received £3,500 in attendance allowances since May — not bad since she hasn't been seen since then and faces disqualification for non-attendance.

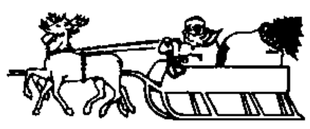
THANET: Coun Chris Wright, who has resigned from the Labour group, wrote to his local paper blaming everyone (but himself) for his demise. But he forgot to tell readers he was awaiting sentence for benefit fraud after lying about his bank account and income and pretending his wife was his sister — not bad for a former chair of the housing benefit committee!

RENFREW: National party chiefs are trying to quell fighting between Labour and SNP councillors. Police have been called to the chamber four times to remove rowdy councillors, and last month Paul Mack (Ind) was led out minutes after the chief constable had spoken on law and order. Shadow Scottish secretary George Robertson was asked to step in by SNP group leader Bruce McFee, after accusing the ruling Labour group of running a fascist regime. Renfrew Labour leader Hugh Henry then called in SNP boss Alex Salmond after SNPers refused to apologise for calling Henry a eunuch.

GOOD TASTE AWARD: Announcing last month's one-day conference on domestic violence and its effects on children, Richmond council's press release was embarrassingly gung-ho: "A hardhitting, one-day conference on children and domestic violence will be held..."

RED FACE OF THE WEEK

WHILE Stirling council delayed putting spy cameras in crime-ridden areas because of funding delays, police went ahead with their own video trap in a public lavatory near Stirling High School where a rent boy was said to be servicing clients. There was considerable embarrassment when McKnacker then recorded a gay encounter and successfully prosecuted two men — one of whom was the senior council official who was to head the crime prevention initiative.



Letters

Private Eye

Deep mid-off

Sir,

Re: Punch Sunk. "In the Deep Midwinter" should really be "In the Bleak Midwinter". This gross inaccuracy exemplifies the school-knocking press! How about studying "Deep House" by Charles Dickens? You can sing "River Bleak, Mountain Hi!" by Anthea Turner or read the book "The Bleak" by Peter Chairly. You see, there is no limit. Whilst watching the steamy film "~~Deep~~, sorry, Bleak Throat", I suggested to Ofsted they might pay ewe a visit.

Yours,
DEREK RACKETT,
Honiton, Devon.

Lookalike

Raine Spencer

Margaret Thatcher

Sir,

I was struck by the resemblance between Raine Spencer and Margaret Thatcher. Is it only a hairdresser they share, or could they by any chance be related?

NICOLE, COUNTESS PAPA
OF RENAULT,
London W1.

Error of judgement

Sir,

I also have taken your magazine for over 26 years, and will continue to do so for as long as you print.

Your article on Lord Justice Judge shows that there are judges who still believe that their establishment must be protected even at the cost of innocent people. It is obvious that Mr P.W. Bennett (Letters, 911) did not read the judgment made by Lord Justice Judge on 15 July 1996 which flies in the face of Mr Bennett's opinion that "there is no one involved in the administration of justice in this country who has a greater concern for justice and the rights of the citizens of this country than Lord Justice Judge".

Lord Justice Judge made a mockery of justice when he gave his "collusion theory" based entirely on "ifs" and "maybes", and this despite four separate police inquiries by Scotland Yard, Countryman, two by West Yorkshire police which all failed to produce a shred of evidence to support such a theory.

However, Mr Bennett was right in saying that this judge is the type of person the judiciary needs... because it needs to be seen to be right or at least not wrong in order to boost flagging public confidence.

Lord Justice Judge cannot hide behind the title of prosecuting counsel this time. The court's decision was entirely his and one which no jury would have reached on the evidence heard. In my opinion no apology is needed — an inquiry, yes. But sadly I suspect that this will not take place.

Yours sincerely,
A. STOCK,
Llandrindod Wells, Powys.

"Nuk! Don't spit at people, it's not nice"

His worship

Sir,

Re: Chester Cathedral. Your "Nooks and Corners" (EYE 911) has got it wrong.

I have only seen the cathedral twice. The first time was in 1946 when I was 21 and, having seen and appreciated only a few of our great cathedrals, I thought what a "gem" Chester was. Ten days ago I had the good fortune to visit it in the company of 11 others who are also interested in medieval cathedral architecture. It was a splendid day out.

Once inside, the staff made us welcome into a living place of worship. At mid-day the duty-canon took a short prayer service in the Lady Chapel, which was purposeful in content, and reverently observed as visitors took part in the service.

In the nave, preparations were being made for a concert later in the day.

Our party also had a short tour of the cathedral by their guide "Nick" who was knowledgeable, articulate and full of enthusiasm for his building. We enjoyed refreshments in the Refectory, whose fabric was preserved in all its 13th century splendour; but recently changed in that its furnishings were modern, and in its attitude to those who use it who are now free to speak during meals.

The only adverse comment I would make, now I am old, tottery, and have poor vision, is the state of the floor which is potentially dangerous to all who walk on it; and I look forward to returning next year when the dean and other "gutless creatures" have levelled the floor to make it safer for those who worship there, and for visitors.

Yours faithfully,
D.J. MARSDEN C.Eng,
Stafford.

Counting the cost

Sir,

I cringed when I heard Andrew Neil pouring his heart out to Clive Anderson over his libel battle against the TELEGRAPH. *"I stood to lose everything," he whinged.*

He should know. As editor of the SUNDAY TIMES *he was responsible for numerous gaffes which cost Mr Murdoch dearly in the libel courts. The most grovelling and expensive libel defeat to date was to my father, David Bookbinder, the former leader of Derbyshire county council, whom he accused of having a corrupt relationship with Owen Oyston.*

But rather than admit his incompetence, Neil chose to drag my family through the torture of a seven-year libel battle. During that time, we had to fight delaying tactic after delaying tactic employed by the SUNDAY TIMES' *lawyers. We teetered on the edge of financial ruin as we sold and re-mortgaged everything in sight in order to fund the lawyers.*

In June this year, Andrew Neil and his "journalists" **unreservedly** *apologised for their errors at the high court.*

Tragically, my mother died four years into the fight to clear our name and was not able to hear Mr Neil's apology. She had to endure years of hate mail and even death threats as a result of the SUNDAY TIMES' *shoddy journalism.*

Yours sincerely,
SUSAN BOOKBINDER,
Allestree, Derby.

All square roots

Sir,

Your Rotten Boroughs piece "The Malice of Westminster" (EYE 15/11) was recently brought to my attention and I must take issue with what is a pure work of fiction.

Over the last two years, we have produced ward based reports on housing/council tax benefit for all council members. I recall that this followed a finance committee request for such information. These reports have not been "mysteriously shelved" and continue to be sent to a number of members from both majority and minority groups on the council.

The information is intended to help members to understand where growth in benefits payments is occurring. As officers we use this information to monitor rent levels and to allocate case loads to staff.

Housing benefit staff have never asked for "the whole thing to be put in writing" and at no stage have we ever threatened to discipline staff in relation to the collection of this data.

Yours faithfully,
W. ROOTS,
Chief Executive, City of Westminster.

Acting up

Sir,

The first half of "Upstage" (EYE 912) notes an interesting chain of, shall we say?, **coincidence** *in theatre and television circles, but you then proceed to grow astounded that, gosh, people in the same profession know and work with each other. It's hardly extraordinary that Giles Croft should be doing work at the National's studio — he did run it for several years, after all. And Jeremy Sams may well have hurtled onto the scene in the last couple of years* **as a director**, *but had been pretty damn pervasive (not just at the National) for some time preceding as designer, translator/adaptor and even composer.*

Of course, if the Genista McIntosh regime at the ROH should decide to stage an opera written by Sams, I'll know that my interpretation of matters was naively charitable...

Yours Trevvily,
IAN SHUTTLEWORTH,
Financial Times.

His days are numbered

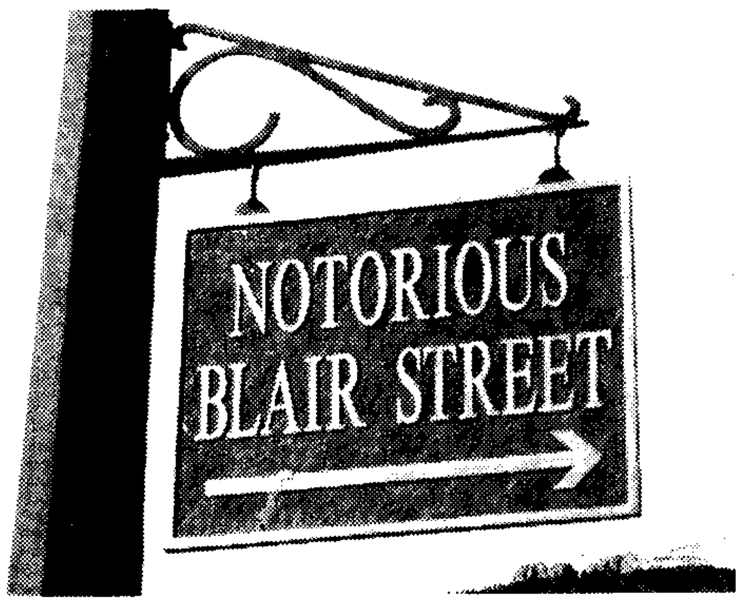
Sir,

Re: David John Cornwell (John Le Carré). Anne-Lise Gotzsche (912) is right: Cornwell did work for MI5. And so is Bookworm: he worked for Six as well. A rough service record runs: Military intelligence 1950-51; MI5 1951-56; MI6 1960(?)-64. Between 1961 and 1963, he was under diplomatic cover as second secretary in Bonn, then as consul in Hamburg. He also taught at Eton for a couple of years in the late 50s.

Yours,
PAT FITZGERALD,
London E5.

"I'm going out, I may be some time"

I-SPY *Silverton, Colorado*



Submitted by Dr A.W. Noltes. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

A cut above the rest

Sir,

On 4 October you contrasted the position of senior managers and nurses at Central Manchester Healthcare Trust on the subject of performance related pay (PRP) and implied that salary increases for senior managers are determined by other senior managers whose commitment to impartiality may be lacking. From the standpoint of "trebles all round" this is regrettably not so.

The chairman and non-executive directors who determine any increases, do so on the basis of independent advice and are highly conscious of their role as stewards of public funds, taking their independence in these matters very seriously.

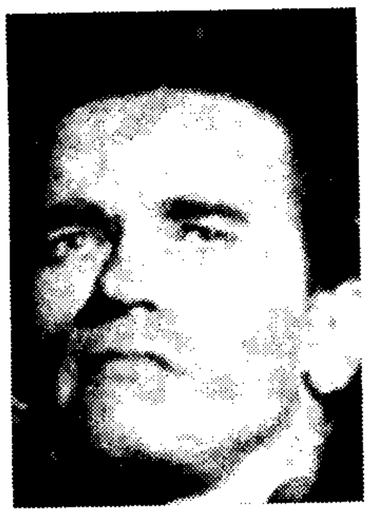
This is perhaps best highlighted by last year's pay settlement where 3 percent was awarded to the majority of staff groups and 2 percent to senior managers. This year will see a differential arrangement of a similar nature.

Might I suggest that a little non-invasive surgery to your NHS correspondent might be in order!

Yours faithfully,
STEVE BARNETT,
Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development, Central Manchester Healthcare NHS Trust.

Lookalike

Arnold Schwarzenegger



Virginia Bottomley

Sir,

Surely there can be no doubt, on closer examination of these pictures, of the relationship between those two "tough cookies" Arnold Schwarzenegger and Virginia Bottomley.

One can only surmise, however, that after the next General Election Mrs Bottomley won't "be back" and her political career is "terminated".

MRS ENID B. CONAN,
Oxon.

Firm belief

Sir,

Re: Rotten Boroughs, EYE *911 — Hackney. Get it right for God's sake.*

Agudas Israel are not a "firm", they are a registered housing association working in the borough providing housing for Orthodox Jewish people (approx. 10 percent of Hackney's population). They work with the full cooperation of the London borough of Hackney and the Housing Corporation.

Denise Robson was appointed by the London borough of Hackney to the Agudas Israel Housing Association Management Committee in line with Housing Corporation recommendations to represent the borough's interest. All committee members work on a voluntary basis.

The London borough of Hackney disposed of some of their empty street properties to housing associations in the borough in line with government edicts. Agudas Israel were one of those housing associations. All properties were sold based on district valuations or if sold for less it was with department of the environment approval.

Simon Matthew was, of course, involved as chair of housing. You would think it strange if he wasn't but where is the conflict of interest story? Come on get after the real villains.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN STEBBING,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

Spending a penny

Sir,

It's not surprising that Hackney council is strapped for funds for such incidentals as housing when it supports a bureaucracy which includes an Assistant Director (Leisure and Continuing Education), Hackney Public Relations and Communications Division (Letters, EYE *912). The nameplate alone must have put a penny on the council tax.*

Yours etc,
JAMES BLEWETT,
Purley, Surrey.

Please rectify

Sir,

In EYE *912 the Marquesa berated the sick, nihilistic element among the brilliant gilded students of St Andrew's university in reelecting Donald Findlay as rector. As a member of this body, there is something I would like to point out to her. She did not mention that the only other candidate for the post, Victoria Coren, daughter of that well known comic journalist Alan Coren (as nostalgic* PUNCH *readers will recall), pulled out at the last minute leaving us with a choice of Findlay, or no rector at all.*

Yours sincerely,
ANGUS EASTON,
Via e-mail.

Grave accusation

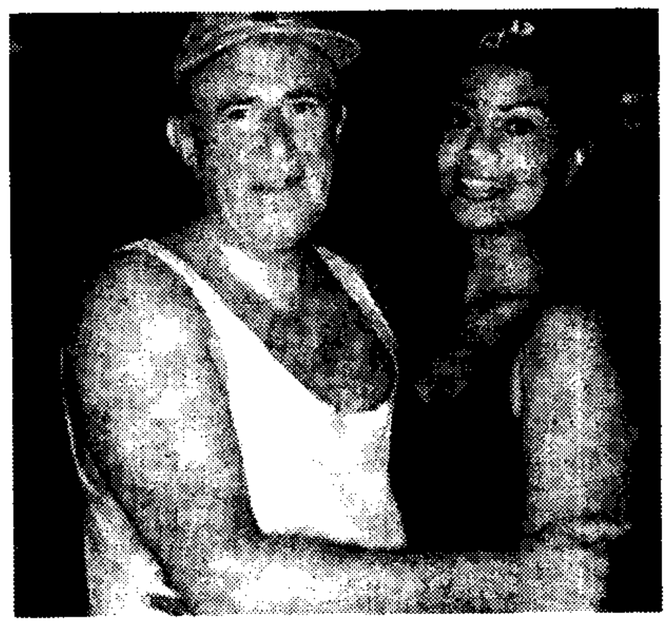
Sir,

I wonder if you have noticed a new video featuring TV's Mr Angus Deayton, entitled "One Foot in the Groin"?

In the Sheffield Virgin Megastore, every copy has a large price sticker carefully placed to obscure the last four letters of the final word of the title, making it read "One Foot in the G".

Surely this could not be a callous ploy to make unwary shoppers think they were getting a much funnier video?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN WOLSTENHOLME,
Sheffield.



Dusk at twilight

Sir,

I notice that Ms Diane Abbot MP complaining about the number of "blue eyed, blondes" in her local hospital. I have heard that you have a picture of a more ethnic nurse, perhaps one working in the geriatric ward?

Yours faithfully,
IAN MORGAN-DICK,
Via e-mail.

MARRIAGES

COLEMAN—BALL. — Martin and Barbara Ball are delighted to announce the marriage of their third daughter Joanna to Matthew Coleman of Guernsey on Monday, 2 September, 1996, in Ko Samui, Thailand.

Jersey Evening Post

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Before we had central heating, we used to put our socks and pants on the radiator to warm them up."
"DR" NEIL FOX, Capital Radio
(John Hemming-Clark)

"The tide is very much in our court now."
KEVIN KEEGAN, Radio 4
(H.J. Neale)

"... you've been playing with fire and now you're reaping the whirlwind."
DR IAN BANKS, ITV
(Tom Mathews)

"They'll perhaps finish in the top three. I can't see them going any higher."
DON HOWE, Sports Argus
(Alun Griffith)

Caller: *What was wonderful was my ten-year-old son scoring a goal for his football team.*
Tommy Boyd: *How old is he?*
Caller: *Ten years old.*
(Stephen Hardy)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"I guess I've been stung about fifty thousand times during my career, and I usually get about six new stings each performance" Norm Gary announced in a publicity leaflet for his forthcoming appearance at the California State Fair. "But they don't hurt much if you pull the stingers out real fast, and let me tell you — I may be nervous, but I'm not nearly as nervous as the audience is."

Gary, a former entomology professor from the University of California at Davis, is known professionally as The Electric Bee Man: "I guess you'd call it a novelty

act. I go on stage, strip naked except for a posing pouch, a battery, and a lightbulb in my navel, and I smear a synthetic hormone paste all over my body. After some pelvic thrusting, I shout 'zoomzigger zoom' and release the bees, all one hundred thousand of them. The hormone in the paste fools the drones into thinking I'm a Queen — which, incidentally, I most certainly am not — and my hair, chest, legs, and arms are soon completely covered with bees. Then, when only my face and fingers are still visible, I take out my clarinet and play Flight of the Bumblebee, stopping only to remove the stingers, as necessary. I play a sort of jazz too, which I call Bee-bop. It's all good old-fashioned Vaudeville really. Kids love it. The bulb lights up when I hear 'encore' from the audience." *(Sacramento Free Press, 18/8/96. Spotter — Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

—o—

"If I could, I'd walk around in the nude like we did in caveman days," Energy Minister Alfredo Adum told surprised members of the Ecuadorian National Congress in Quito. "In fact, sometimes I think the only difference between Cro-Magnon man and Alfredo Adum is clothes."

Warming to his theme, the minister continued: "I'd grab any woman I liked by the hair, take her back to my cave and devour her. I'd satisfy my sexual and physical appetites because in those days you ate women in both senses. You see, people actually had fewer prejudices in prehistoric times, they didn't bother with the please and the thankyou, and the 'can I help you madam?' They just had their way with the ladies and dined on them afterwards, and we were all far better off for it."

Condemning his remarks, Berenice Polit, spokesperson for the feminist group Women for Democracy, said: "Alfredo Adum is a lunatic, and his comments must be especially frightening for his mother, his wife, and his daughter. Cabinet Minister or not, he must be castrated immediately." *(Buenos Aires Herald, 17/10/96. Spotter — David Ross)*

—o—

"Since the prettier candidate has already been blessed by God, it is only right that we should hire the uglier one," said Nik Abdul Aziz during a lecture to government employees in the Malaysian state of Kelantan. "After all, if we do not choose the ugly candidates, who will?"

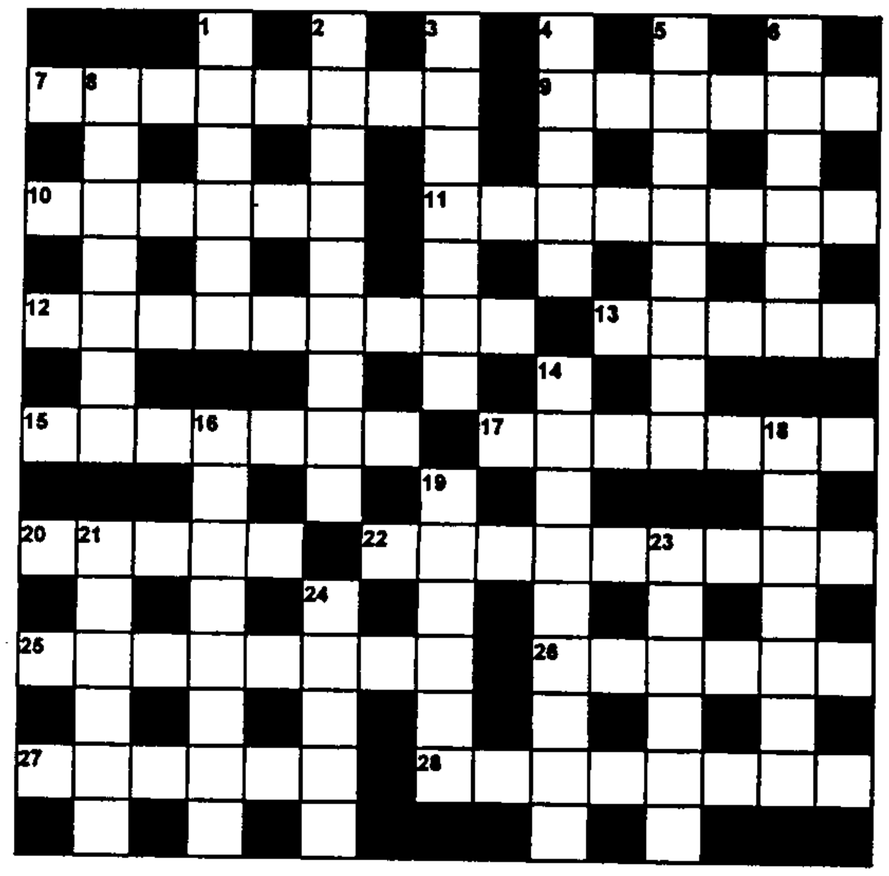
Aziz, Chief Minister of Kelantan (one of Malaysia's most fervently Islamic states), explained the thinking behind his latest decree. "There are far too many pretty women in government offices at the moment, distracting male workers and lowering business efficiency with their pert and yielding tightness. But when ugly women are employed in an office, then the work rate increases wondrously. Besides, we must be ever watchful for possible immoral activities, and it is well-known that pretty women cause unhealthy activities that lead to insanity, blindness, sickness and bends. That is why, from now on, thorough ugliness must be considered a deciding factor at all job interviews." (Utusan Malaysia, 25/10/96. Spotter — G. Crossland)

COMPILED BY

Victor Lewis-Smith

EYE CROSSWORD 68

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

7 A load of balls by parties bearing on substance abuse (8)
9 Forced growth environment responsible for latest secondary education cut (6)
10 (see 4)
11 Hawk to sack one-time defender of Britain (8)
12/25/22 Naff Chris Tarrant show — yuk! Do see him right away if you want an old-fashioned, really poor Yuletide environment (9,3,2,3,9)
13 (see 27)
15 Club prat up against new vice president (7)
17 Act to avoid being phlegmatic and pay the price? (5,2)
20 What someone who gets fired ultimately amounts to? (5)
22 (see 12)
25 (see 12)
26 Gay medication? (6)
27/13 Dumb thing getting screwed, Carol (6,5)
28 Occupier — one in a position to do the business? (8)

DOWN

1 Label some megastar maniacal (6)
2 DJ's ruse for keeping equipment in place (9)
3 One who will save us all from Amis? He's incredible! (7)
4/10 What's become of the fighting man in such a berk? (5,6)
5 Shagging traditionally on the menu at Christmas? (8)
6 Hard sod Santa comes down on? (6)
8 Victory that hurts Brenda — that's the ticket! (7)
14 Your MP's casually about to nod off, observed by many, this day (3,6)
16 Our mag, crafty thing, puts the emphasis on viewers (8)
18 Raise leg and do the dirty on another luvvie? (7)
19 A dog's pants (6)
21 Ex-prime minister settled in cash — a miracle! (6)
23 Having sworn, Yoko takes hat off (2,4)
24 Virginia's bad taste? (5)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 18.12.96. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 67

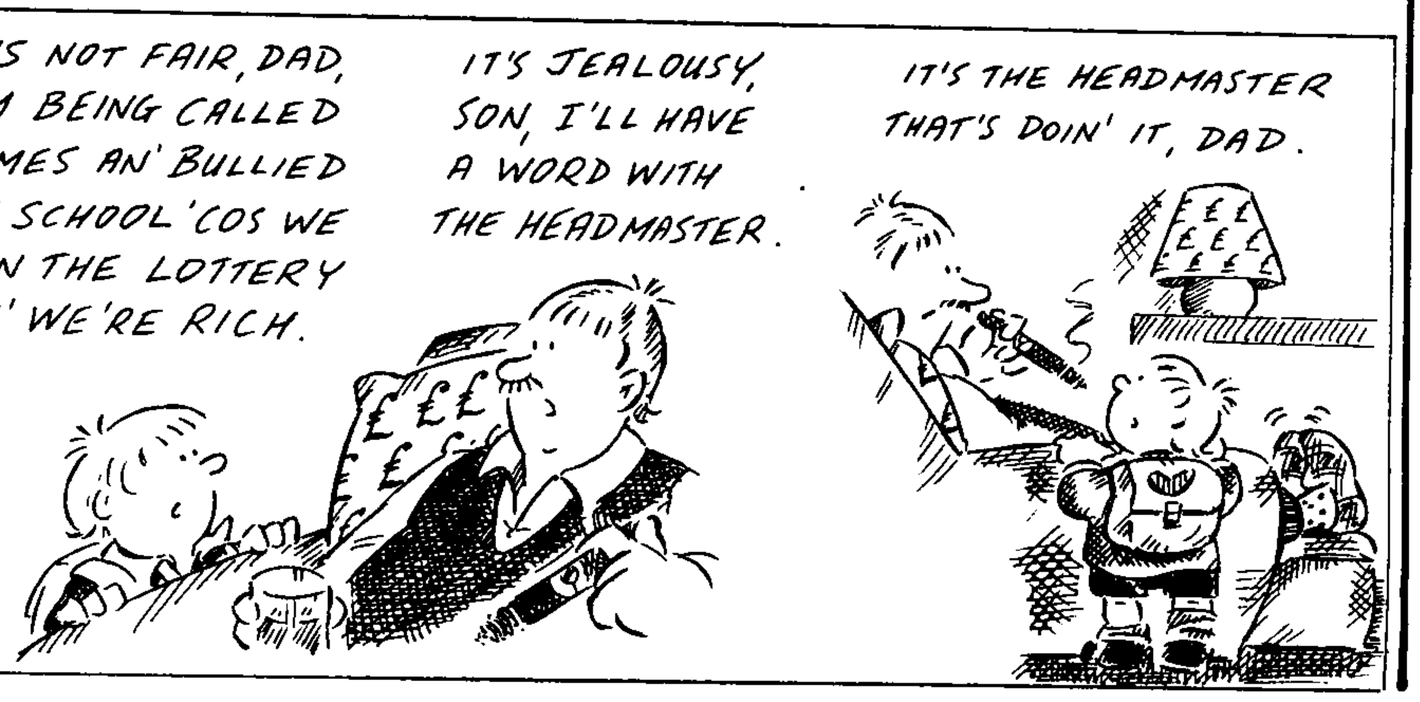
Winner: CHARLES POTTER

ACROSS: 8 Pecker 9 Skinhead 10 Habitat 11 Edward 12 Fatso 13 Mass lobby 16/22/21 Serious Fraud Office 17/28 Windsor Castle 20 War Office 22 (see 16) 24 Curfew 26 The Word 27 Knickers 28 (see 17).

DOWN: 1 Lech Walesa 2 Akabussi 3 Trots 4 Ashtray 5 Libel suit 6 The Who 7 Parr 14 Blow-up doll 15 Guy Fawkes 18 Dormouse 19 Ecstasy 21 (see 16) 23 Retch 24 Ulna.

The Lottery Winners

TURNER


IT'S NOT FAIR, DAD, I'M BEING CALLED NAMES AN' BULLIED AT SCHOOL 'COS WE WON THE LOTTERY AN' WE'RE RICH.
IT'S JEALOUSY, SON, I'LL HAVE A WORD WITH THE HEADMASTER.
IT'S THE HEADMASTER THAT'S DOIN' IT, DAD.

BIGGEST HUMILIATION EVER IN TV QUIZ SHOW

by Our TV Staff **Baz Bambagascoigne**

THE biggest-ever defeat in the long-running television battle of knowledge, "Prime Minister's Question Time", was yesterday suffered by a team representing the University of Life, Brixton, captained by John Major, at the hands of Baliol College, Oxford, led by Tony Blair.

The final score left Blair's team a staggering 37 points ahead whilst Major's team failed to answer a single question correctly.

In one particularly feeble round all Major could say was: "I refer the Right Honourable Gentleman to the answer I gave a few moments ago." When asked what that was, he said: "I can't remember."

Your Starter for No.10

The quizmaster, Mrs Jeremy Boothroyd, said: "It was embarrassing. I felt sorry for him. He knew nothing about Europe, the economy, war pensions, casualty units or indeed anything else."

"We're going home soon – go and nick a car"

A Dr Mawhinney writes

AS a doctor I am often asked, "Doctor, why don't you clear off, you bastard?"

Well, the short answer is: "Because the party needs me." This common delusion is known as *Chairmanicus peptic ulstericus* and the symptoms are irritability, bad temper, more irritability and outspoken attacks on everybody.

If you are worried about me you can take a ronning jomp in the fockin leek yez bastard.

© *Dr B. Geldof* (surely Mawhinney? Ed), *c/o The University of Life.*

Channel 4 – Secret Lives

Douglas Bastard — The Truth

BEHIND the façade of a neurotic, whingeing self-pitying disabled misfit the courageous Secret Lives team reveal that Bastard was also a Battle of Britain pilot and national hero who helped to win the war. Amazingly, Bastard was not his real name — he was originally called 'Bader'.

NEXT WEEK: Jesus. The Secret Lives team discover that far from being the meek and mild character of Christian propaganda, Jesus was a difficult, abrasive troublemaker who:

- *Had a difficult relationship with his mother.*
- *Was hated by many of those he worked with, including star witness J. Iscariot.* (That's enough Channel 4. Ed)

That Chez Nico Kenneth Clarke Lunch In Full

Sopel of the Day (Leak)

— ✻ —

Anti-Major Beef with Spilt Beans and Conrad Black Pudding

— ✻ —

Whole Dish of Brussels Sprouts

— ✻ —

Amazing Sauce

— ✻ —

Steamed-Up Pudding with Single European Currant

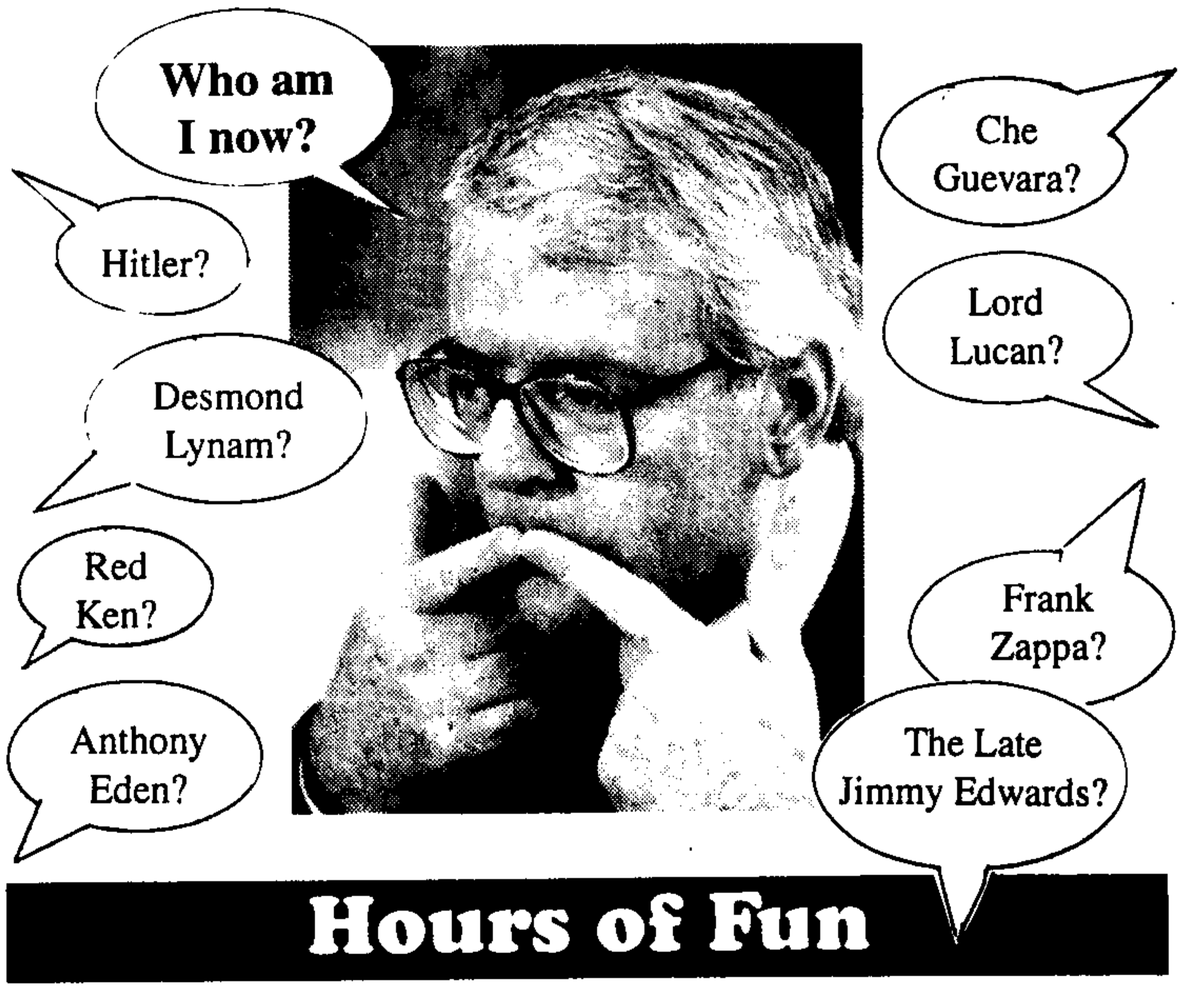
— ✻ —

To drink: Whine

For You To Play At Home

Major's New Xmas Party Game

Guess The Moustache!



Hours of Fun

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

Today my friend Mr Clarke delivered his budget. Unfortunately it was delivered to the Daily Mirror first, but luckily they sent it back saying that they didn't want to lose readers. However, everyone said that it was a brilliant budget which will definitely win me the next election. Not that I was going to lose anyway, but this will make my victory even more certain.

Before his speech Mr Clarke called me into his room and let me know some of the secrets in his box. "I think we've got a real winner here, John," he said. "I'm cutting income tax by 1p." "How can we afford to do that?" I asked him. "Simple," he said, as he danced around to one of his jazz records, smoking one of his funny little cigars. "I'm putting up all the other taxes — council tax, insurance tax, fag tax, airport tax — and heart attacks!" He laughed very loudly at his own joke. But I was not convinced. "Surely everyone will notice?" I said. "No, no," he said. "I will read that bit very quickly and cough a lot."

Tuesday

"Chancellor Coughs His Way Through Tax Rises In Fake Giveaway Budget" was the headline in all the pro-Labour papers, like the Daily Mail. Perhaps Mr Clarke is not so clever after all, certainly not as clever as me when I was the Chancellor. No wonder he is not prime minister, which I am. Oh yes. I shall now have to win the election all on my own, and I have come up with a brilliant plan, which I have called Operation Blairbuster. It is very simple. I ring up Charles Moore, the editor of the Daily Telegraph and tell them that I will never join the EMU until after the election. So much for all the people who accuse me of sitting on the fence. Not that there is anything wrong with sitting on the fence, if that is the prudent policy at the time.

Wednesday

My ex-friend Mr Clarke has made another massive blunder, even worse than his give-away budget. He has said that my new policy not to have a single currency until after the election is "preposterous". "Such a policy," he said, "could only be supported by a total idiot with a grey suit and glasses." Obviously I will have to show who is boss again, like I did with Mr Waldegrave. I was just preparing a press statement saying that only an idiot with Hush Puppies and an unpleasant nicotine habit could find my brilliant idea preposterous, when my special hot-line buzzer sounded. This meant that Mr Heseltine wanted to see me about something with not inconsiderable urgency. I immediately ran to his door where, luckily, the green light was on. When I went in, he was holding a piece of paper. "Ah, Major," he said. "Listen to this. You will be the first to hear the brilliant new poem I have written to commemorate my millennium."

He then read from the paper in a very loud voice while standing on his desk:

In Greenwich Town did Heseltine
A stately Hezza dome decree,
Where Thames the sacred river ran
Through enterprise zones measureless to man
Towards the "heart of the EEC".

"Shouldn't it be 'EU'?" I asked him. "Be quiet," he said. "That does not rhyme. Anyway, why I've called you in, Major, is that I want an explanation for this." He held up a copy of the Telegraph, with a huge headline "Major Says 'No' to Monetary Union". "It was my idea," I said. "I told the..." "You are not here to have ideas," he interrupted, rather rudely in my judgement, "you are here to do what I say. Now go and tell the Telegraph that it was all a ghastly mistake and that my policy on the Single Currency remains unaltered." "I thought that the policy of not having a policy was my policy," I told him. This showed him that I was my own man, and I then went off and rang the Telegraph immediately.

Thursday

"Major faces new crisis" say all the papers. What rubbish! All that has happened is that I have lost my majority in the House of Commons and am now 37 points behind in the polls. So what? If I were a football manager, which I am in a sense, I would say to my team: "Pick up your bats, go out there and score some goals." Oh yes. I would not give myself a red card. Oh no. Or a yellow one.

Friday

It is time for me to go on television since everyone else in the party has been on already.

Mr Dr Mawhinney made a lot of calls to the top TV hosts but they all seemed to be busy. My friend Sir David Frost left a message on my ansaphone to say I could not appear on his show because he had a very important interview scheduled with the dog from the *101 Dalmatians* film. Also Mr Chris Evans's producer rang back to say he could not help as he was resting due to "nasal stress". Even Miss Gaby Roslin, who is a favourite of my wife Norman's, had no space because she had a live link-up with President Yeltsin.

Luckily the BBC's Mr Humphrys who usually does the Today programme was free and agreed to come to Chequers to interview me on a very important programme whose name I have forgotten.

Sunday

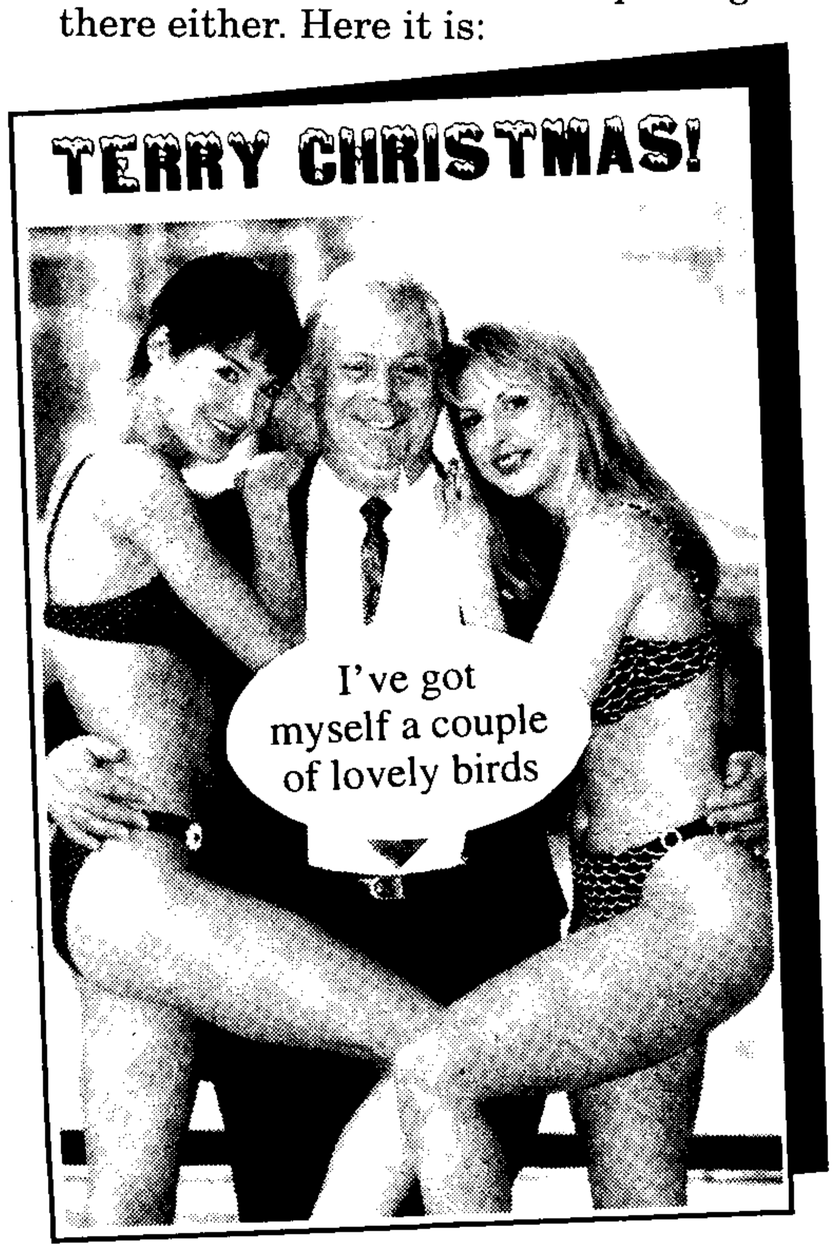
My interview was a huge success (as were Norman's Frozen Cheese Nibbles, which the television crew enjoyed immensely).

The country is now left in no doubt that on the matter of the single currency my government is standing firm on its decision not to decide anything. As I said, continuing with my popular football analogies, "If you are not on the field, you cannot take part in round-table discussions about where the ball is." Oh no.

Norman said afterwards that it was "time to give the Number 10 shirt to someone else and take an early bath". She clearly knows nothing about football at all. Game, set and hole in one to me. Howzat!

Monday

Terry has sent me a considerably unfunny Christmas card which I will not be putting on the mantelpiece along with all the other cards from my ex-friends which I will not be putting there either. Here it is:



To make matters worse, inside it simply says:

"Terry Major-Ball. Best-selling Author, TV Presenter, Columnist, Personality. Available for interviews. Phone Wallington 78742372 (home)/0898-762343 (mobile). Or email: terry-star@majorball.co.uk"

DUCHESS SUFFERING FROM ME SYNDROME

PEOPLE close to the Duchess of York reckon that she has been suffering from what is commonly known as the ME syndrome. The symptoms normally manifest themself in the victim in the following ways: always talking about themselves; courting maximum personal publicity via the media; and selling exclusives to Hello! magazine.

The result is that everyone around the Duchess grows very tired (of her), and wants to drop off every time her name is mentioned. Said a spokesman for the Duchess: "Apparently, there is only one known cure for this ailment — a holiday. The only snag is that she will have to make another 50 personal appearances to be able to afford one."

LATE NEWS

Major to sue school following 'poor' exam results

IN a shock move, the Prime Minister looks set to sue his former school after he failed to get "good enough" exam results. Said a spokesman for the Prime Minister: "Mr Major is perfectly within his rights to sue his old school, as it is patently obvious that he failed to get the kind of education which the nation's leader so clearly requires. If the PM goes on to win this case, he has promised to spend the money on a set of encyclopedias, with pictures and everything."

MEDICAL BRIEFING

Dr Thomas Stuttaford

Is it ME again?

YES, sadly it is. What usually happens in these cases is that you have to read even more pieces by ME, as soon as the news breaks that anyone has got any disease and *(cont. p. 94)*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Tiny Tim

So. Farewell
Then, Tiny
Tim.

Once you
Tiptoed through the
Tulips.

But now
You are
Pushing up the
Daisies.

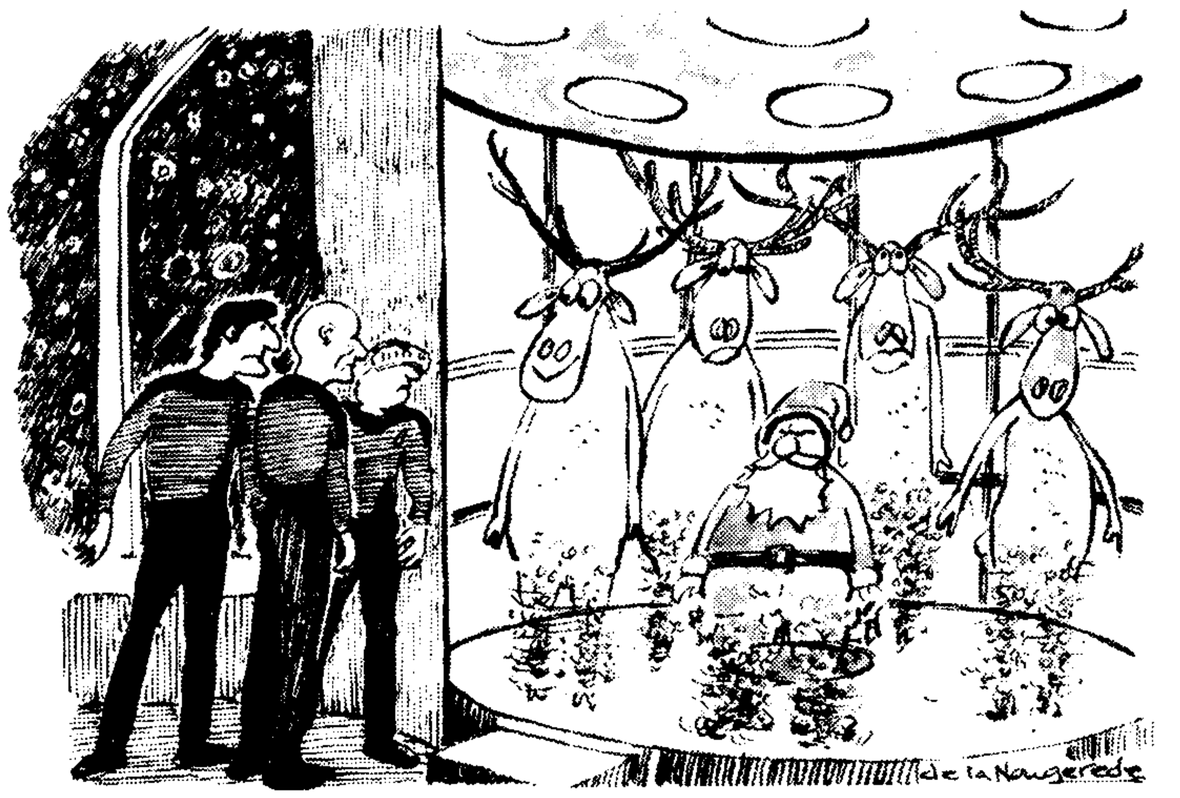
E.J. Thribb (17½)

VERY LONELY, sincere, active widower, own hose, secure, elderly seeks caring sincere lady, non-smoker, friendship/companionship, holidays etc.

Reading Standard

Indian F grad., sikhs **30** something n/s Asian M with SOH & zest for life, various ints. Cambs. Previous messages lost.

Observer



NEW FROM GNOME-TEL

Bryn Terfel *(TV's Mr Opera)*
with the choir of King's College Cambridge sings
Children's Christmas Favourites

At last Britain's most brilliant opera singer brings alive the most magical nursery carols from Christmas.

Hits include:

- ***While shepherds watched (their socks by night)*** *Trad. 1953*
- ***We Three Kings of Orient are (one in a taxi, one in a car)*** *Trad. 1967*

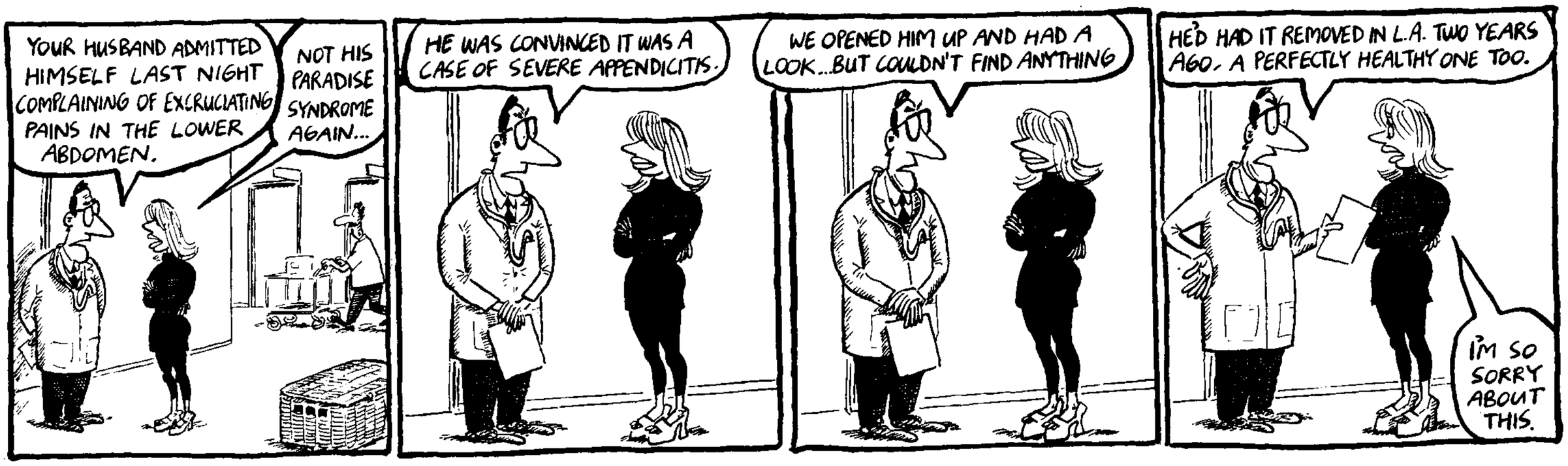
and the unforgettable

- ***Jingle Bells (Batman smells, Robin's gone away)*** *Trad. 1972*

THE BEST CLASSICAL CD THIS CHRISTMAS

Celeb

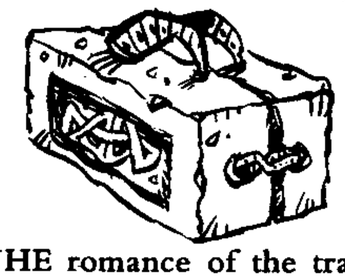
LIGGER


YOUR HUSBAND ADMITTED HIMSELF LAST NIGHT COMPLAINING OF EXCRUCIATING PAINS IN THE LOWER ABDOMEN.
NOT HIS PARADISE SYNDROME AGAIN...
HE WAS CONVINCED IT WAS A CASE OF SEVERE APPENDICITIS.
WE OPENED HIM UP AND HAD A LOOK...BUT COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING
HE'D HAD IT REMOVED IN L.A. TWO YEARS AGO. A PERFECTLY HEALTHY ONE TOO.
I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THIS.

GNOME'S XMA

From The Gnome Bygones Collection

1st Century Celtic Suitcase



THE romance of the travelling pilgrim can now be yours with this totally authentic replica of the suitcases carried by early Christian monks on their way to the Sacred Isle of Iona. Hand-tooled from pure Scottish granite with carved ramshorn handle and intricate snake-design bronze locks.

Sizes: Family, Long-Stay, Hand-Luggage.
Price: £375.99 *(p&p extra)*

Female Fitness Fans

THE LATVIAN BRUSH 'n' DUMBBELL

SIMPLE yet effective, thousands of Latvian women attest to the benefits of this advance in time-saving total exercise! The Latvian Brush 'n' Dumbbell combines routine daily grooming with a regulated fitness programme.

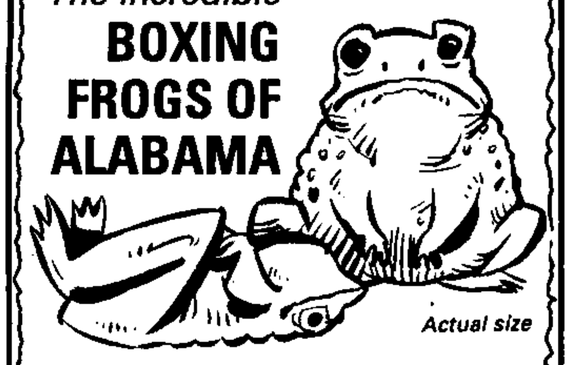
Keep-fit experts agree that five minutes daily with the combined hairbrush and weight system increases muscle tone, redistributes cellulite, increases calorific burn-off and reduces fatty tissue from unwanted areas.

"It worked for me. It will work for you!" says top Latvian TV presenter **Milli Zbrugnevgz**

Amazing novelty from US!!

The Incredible

BOXING FROGS OF ALABAMA



Actual size

FOR the first time in the UK the old Southern sport of Frog Boxing is now available in your home. See these "pit bull frogs" square up to each other just like Mike Tyson and Frank Bruno on Sky-TV!!

As approved by RSPCA inspectors.

Price: £250 the pair

Computer Pornography Lovers!!

INTERNET CURTAINS

No more red faces when your parents or friends catch you downloading your favourite raunchy pics from Adult Web sites! The "nets" fit any VDU — and now at last only you can see what's on the screen. Phwoarr!!

▶ Price: £10 set of two ◀

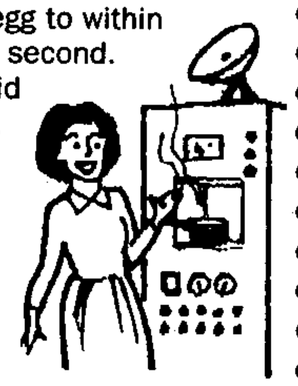
● *Colours: Blue, Electric Blue, Blue Peter.* ● ***Plays theme tune from Channel 4's Girlie Show***

World's most accurate egg timer EGG-RITE 2000

BOILED egg too hard? Or too runny? Never again, when you use Egg-Rite 2000.

This laser chronometer is linked by satellite to the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, and will time your egg to within 1/1000th of a second.

With a liquid crystal display, this leap in ovular cuisine technology is no bigger than the average fridge.



Phone 22 746 33

Give your friends a nasty shock!!

WILL SELF Horror Mask

Hours of fun with this lifelike latex mask of Britain's most famous novelist, restaurant critic and drug addict!

Watch the kiddies scream with terror as they think that Will Self has walked into the room.

Price: 2p for 4 masks

Businessmen!

At last the TWO-IN-ONE REVERSIBLE TROUSER

No more packing two pairs of trousers for business trips! Now, with this breakthrough in dual smart-to-leisurewear technology you only need to take one pair!

Wool 'n' worsted on the outside for the conference — then hey presto! brushed denim on the inside for that casual drink in the hotel bar!

Colours: *Grey/Blue, Blue/Grey.*

Sizes: *Large, Medium, Nigel Lawson.*

Price: *£125.99 (belt extra).*

Pet lovers!! Cheer up your gerbil with

GERBUZZI

the world's first whirlpool bath specially designed for gerbils!!

Simply pop your furry friend into his "Gerbuzzi" and watch his face light up with pleasure as the bubbling waters work their healing magic.

Other models available for snakes, budgies, goldfish, etc.

Price: £2.95

(as seen on Rolf Harris's Animal Hospital)

SCRABBLE LOVERS!!

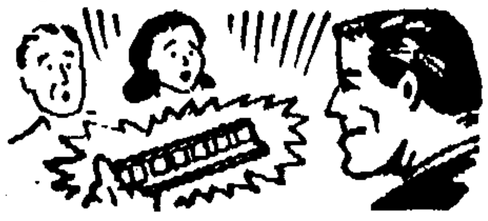
Say goodbye to brain-racking misery as you struggle to make a word with

SCRABB-o-MATIC

Just put tiles on computerised rack and — hey presto! — it automatically sorts your letters into maximum-scoring word formations.

Looks just like an ordinary tile-rack but thanks to this electronic marvel from Gibraltar you will now win every time!!

***Price: £2,816.99 (plus VAT)**



Plays theme tune from TV's Two Fat Cooks

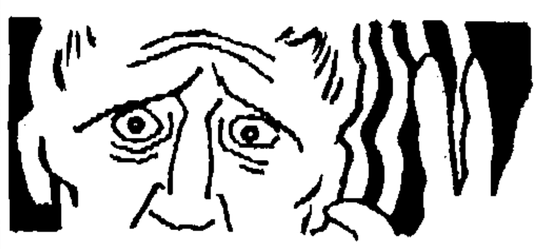
The Lucky Euro of Luxembourg!!

For thousands of years people have had their own currencies. But now, thanks to Herr Kohl, everyone can have the Lucky Euro, which has brought peace and happiness to the people of Luxembourg since the 14th century BC.

Price: 1 Euro (plus £25 p&p)

AMAZING!!

Learn the piano in 2 minutes with HOME HYPNO-VID



Pioneered by leading Swiss mesmerist Dr Johannathon Muller, this incredible video hypnosis programme can turn you into a world-class concert pianist in less than half an hour. Tunes you will be able to play include Beethoven's *Für Elise*, Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer* and Mozart's Horn Concerto in F Major.

Price: £2124.99

AS MAIL MART

From The House of Kitchens™

The Melody Blender

This unique blender is especially programmed to cut out the irritating whirring and grinding noise as vegetables are turned into soup, replacing it with your favourite magical melodies chosen by David Mellor.

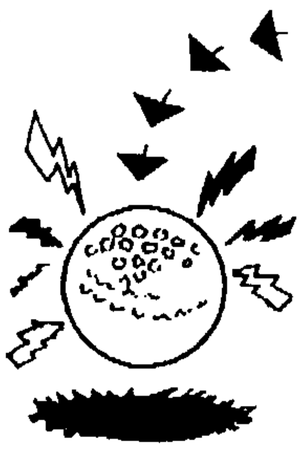
The Melody Blender plays a selection from the following tunes: ♪ *Vivaldi's Four Seasons*
♪ *Bach's Air on a G-String*
♪ *Shostakovich's 14th Symphony.*

British Safety Standard Award pending

Price: £58.99

Say Goodbye to Golfing Misery with the incredible

BALL IN ONE



Reduce your handicap with a single stroke! Literally!

This golfing gizmo from Ghana will turn you into the player you always wanted to be.

Simply programme the ball's electronic mini-computer with the exact details of each hole before you tee off! And — hey presto! — Ball-In-One does the rest!

Plays theme tune from BBC's The Simpsons.

Price: £2,999.99 per ball

An end to sodden bath-mat misery with

SOGGONE

Price: £25.99

■ *From the Institute of Bathroom Studies, Gabon, comes this amazing breakthrough in bathtime technology. The battery-powered Soggone is fitted with an automatic damp-detector which activates thousands of high-energy thermo-cells in your bathmat. Within seconds mat is nice 'n' dry!!*

WARNING! DO NOT USE IN WET CONDITIONS

Plays theme tune from ITV's Moll Flanders

From The Gnome Bygones Collection

Your very own

Georgian Fire Extinguisher

YES, turn your home into a Jane Austen dreamland! This elegant, period-style fire extinguisher made from hand-painted Staffordshire pottery has leather hose and engraved sterling silver faucet and nosepiece.

Contains at least two gallons of water *(not supplied).*

*Price: **£277.79** for a matching pair. Suitable for hallway, library or garage.*

Botanical Breakthrough **Price: £995.37**

The Houseplant Companion

■**How often do you go on holiday knowing that although a neighbour will water your plants they will not spend the necessary hours talking to them?**

■Now this self-timing miniature audio system will dedicate itself to conversation with your potted friends while you are away.

Choice of voices: ● *David Attenborough* ● *Prince Charles* ● *Rabbi Lionel Blue*

As used at Kew Gardens

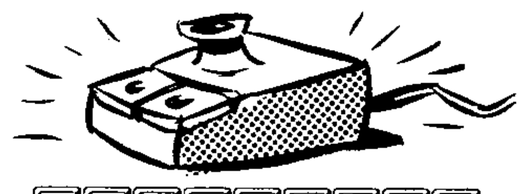
Say goodbye to toddler car-seat misery with

KIDDI-STIK

No more fiddling and fumbling with straps and belts as you try to get your toddler into his special car seat. With this unique velcro novelty from Finland your baby-gro and/or romper suit comes fitted with ultra-sticky pads that clamp onto any car seat cover. Hey presto! Tiny passenger's nice 'n' safe in seconds.

Price: £575.99

Plays theme tune from controversial movie Crash



HOT-WATER MOUSE

It's an icy winter's morning. You turn on your computer, reach for your mouse to start the day's work and — brr! — cold fingers!

Suffer no more – Gnomosoft's revolutionary Hot-Water Mouse can simply be filled from the kettle when you make your early morning coffee. Bye-bye chilblains!! Hello greater productivity!!

● ***Price: £599.99***

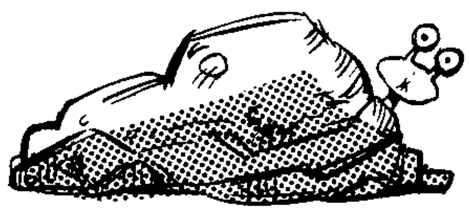
(Warning: must not be connected to electrical equipment)

ASTOUNDING OFFER!!

For the first time ever you can now own a piece of genuine

MARTIAN ROCK

(Every sample is guaranteed to contain evidence of life on the planet Mars, invisible to the naked eye)



Actual weight: 0.0000013 milligrams. Comes in lead-lined box with certificate signed by head of NASA space programme.

Price: £370,412

WARNING: Do not open box, as sample may be radioactive.

A breakthrough in pedal transport accident prevention

The Cyclist's AIR BAG™

FROM the Den Haag laboratories in Holland comes a revolution in cycling safety.

Now with this simple air bag the cyclist will reap the benefits of 100% protection to the upper chest and lower facial areas of the body.

2 million already sold in Peking alone.

Plays theme tune from hit movie Crash

Price: £64.64

A must for motorists!

WHEEL-O-COOL

No more sweating in traffic jams, thanks to this ingenious auto air conditioner perfected by French troops during the Gulf War.

With one flick of a switch your steering wheel becomes a high-powered fan, cooling you down while everyone else boils over!

Price: £904.72 (plus VAT)

Fits: Nissan, Wexford, Ford Morse, Vauxhall Taggart and Toyota Cracker.

Plays theme tune from hit movie "Crash"

BATH LOVERS

SINGING WHALE SOAP

Relax **properly** in the bath to the sound of authentic whalesong, a sound medically proven to bring a sense of wellbeing to those stressed out by today's busy lifestyle.

A low-pitched hum emerges from the soap as soon as it comes into contact with water. The soap sinks — and sings!

Varieties: Blue Whale, Hump-Back Whale, Princess of Whale.

Price: 3p (box of 6)

(WARNING: Whale song in some cases is inaudible to the human ear)

Say goodbye to dog-poo-on-shoe misery with the amazing

POOPER SNOOPER

Price: £595.99

Just fit this miraculous miniature sensor from Mozambique onto your favourite shoes or boots and — abracadabra!

The Pooper Snooper will detect any dog mess on the pavement up to a range of 500m — and warn you with flashing toe-cap light and klaxon siren.

Also works for ● Chewing gum ● Bubble gum ● Dead pigeon

CHRISTMAS FILMS

with BARRY NORMAL

CHRISTMAS EVE EVE

9.15 am *Pride and Sensibility.*
The classic 1935 Hollywood version of all Jane Austen's novels starring Errol Flynn and Betty Grable. Squire Popinjay longs to see his daughter Emilia wed, but is the dashing American adventurer Capt. Armand Hammer the right choice?

CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING

12.15 pm *Mansfield Abbey.*
Lush 1950s cinerama version of Jane Austen's novel, re-set in Texas, starring Elizabeth Taylor as Emmy-Lou, the spoilt cattle heiress, who falls in love with Rock Hudson, as the handsome new Baptist minister Rev. Solomon Gayetrouser. All ends happily when they discover oil on the land.

CHRISTMAS DAY EVENING

7.15 pm *The Muppets' Emma* (1973).
Miss Piggy stars as Jane Austen's voluptuous Emma Pighouse, daughter of hypochondriac father Kermit Froghouse in this seasonal romp. Don't miss sensational song and dance sequence in which Telly Savalas appears as himself.

BOXING DAY EVE

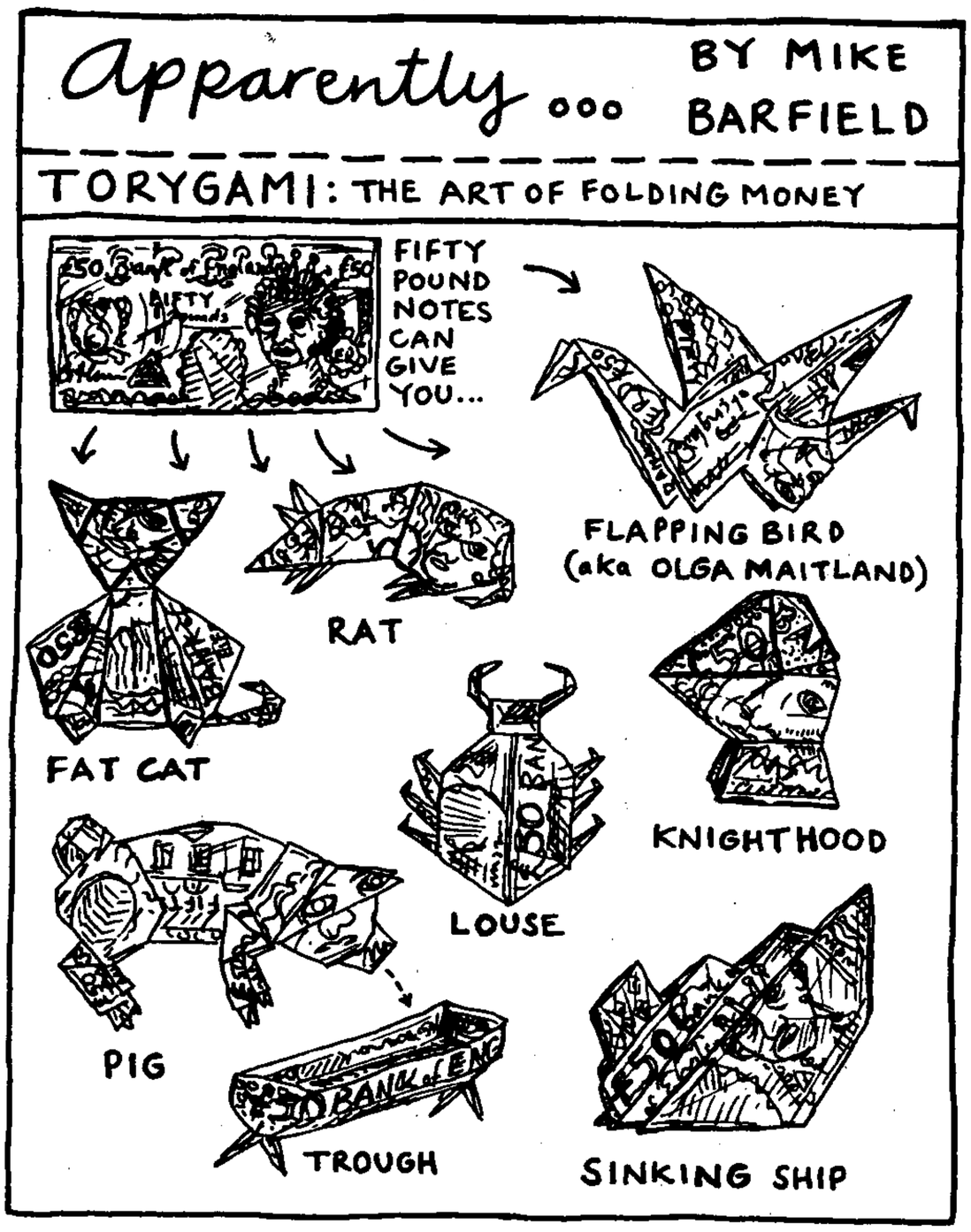
1.05 am *Persuasion* (1991).
Clint Eastwood's unforgettable Wild West reworking of Jane Austen's classic tale of frustrated love amongst the English middle-classes. Watch out for cameo role by Lee Van Cleef as the Butler Wagstaff.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY MONDAY

2.40 pm *They Took Eurostar to Bruges* (1996).
Special made-for-TV disaster movie loosely based on original wartime classic *They Flew to Bruges* (1952). Bob Hoskins takes on the David Tomlinson role a Squadron Leader "Fruity" Massingberd, battling to get his train through the smoke and flame of the tunnel, to reach the "target for tonight". Helen Mirren co-stars as the feisty stewardess who brings the train safely to land at Bruges airport.
Eye rating: One to miss.

NEW YEAR HOLIDAY TUESDAY

3.15 am *The Treasure of the Sierra Harrods* (1956).
Three adventurers learn of a vast pile of gold belonging to the mysterious Eastern potentate Mohammed Al Fayed, hidden deep in the editorial offices of Punch. They hatch a plan to take it all, but they soon fall out and start sacking each other. Strong cast includes John Goodman as Peter McLie, Burt Reynolds as "Mad Mick" Molloy and a young Dustin Hoffman as Stewart Steven. Omar Sharif is unforgettable as the wily Fayed who cheats them all.
Warning: this film is unsuitable for anyone.



LUNAR DISCOVERY ASTOUNDS SCIENTISTS

by Our Astronomical Staff **Bel Moon**

SCIENTISTS have identified large areas of white matter on the dark side of the moon's surface which have overturned all their previous theories.

The vast areas, formerly believed to be lakes of frozen water, have now been revealed to be piles of unsold copies of the humorous magazine, *Punch*.

The X Fayeds

"How on earth did they get there?" asked NASA project leader Dr Peter McSackey in a statement issued to journalists this week.

"One can only assume that the copies of *Punch* have crash-landed on the moon after being expelled from the earth's atmosphere by disappointed readers."

The X Editor Files

McSackey continued: "This remarkable find at least confirms one thing. There is clearly no intelligent life on the moon."

Full map of the Sea of Boredom (Mare Tediosum) on page 94.

That University Challenge Rout in full

(Silly music and studio applause)

Paxperson *(for it is he):* Tonight our contestants are Blackstone College, London, named after the legendary Tessa Blackstone, and the University of Neasden (formerly the North Circular Polytechnic).

(Buzzer sounds from Wayne Einstein of Neasden)

Einstein: The answers to the first 30 questions are: Beethoven's opus 131, Zimmelmann's Third Law, the anacrobrytic bone, Beach Boys 1963, James Chuter-Ede, 135 for 6 declared and 418-2, the Elder Pliny, Ford Madox Ford *(continues in similar vein for 20 minutes).*

Paxmachine: Look, I'm going to offer the next question only to Blackstone, who are now 550 points behind. Blackstone, what are your names? And remember, no conferring...

All: Er...

(Buzzer sounds from Einstein of Neasden)

Einstein: Simon Beard, Mike Dim, Sandra Cardigan and Danny Dandruff.

Paxvobiscum: Correct. So the final score is Neasden 786 and Tessa Blackstone minus-20...

(Silly music plays. Ends)

ON OTHER PAGES

Why Oh Why Are Today's Students So Ignorant Apart From The Ones From Neasden? asks **Paul Johnson**, who didn't see the programme.

CHRISTMAS FICTION

John Le Cash 'n' Carré's

TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SHOP ASSISTANT

THE STORY SO FAR: Britain's leading spymaster Mrs Stella Rimington has landed a plum job at Marks & Spencer, bringing with her donnish espionage chief from MI5 George Smiley.

Now read on...

THE DOOR swung open and Smiley nervously wiped his glasses on his paisley pattern tie (£19.99 wool-and-acrylic mix). "So how's *the department*, George?" asked Stella imperiously.

"You leave *the department* to me," George replied, blinking in the neon light of 1st Floor Menswear.

"I hear *the sweaterman* has defected," said Stella.

"He's gone to our cousins at C&A. But he knows nothing."

"Not even the new leisure knitwear plans?" Stella looked unsure.

"We gave him false designs," Smiley reassured his bluestocking boss. "We told him that beige was the colour for this season's cardigans."

They both laughed knowingly. The knowing laugh of 35 years' experience of counter-intelligence and international intrigue.

"It's just like old times, eh, George? But what about *the exchange*?"

Smiley looked at his watch and then glanced at the door. 11.27am. It was almost time.

"Our *customer* will be here with *the merchandise* any second now."

As he spoke the lift doors opened and the unmistakable features of Oleg Smirnoff emerged from the shadows.

"Ah, Mr Smirnoff. We have a deal, I believe?" Smiley raised a quizzical eyebrow.

"So I understand, Mister Smiley," replied the Russian in his thick Ukrainian accent. Smiley took control.

"You place the size 9 grey socks on the counter and we will exchange them for a size 11."

The Russian hesitated. "How do I know I can trust you?"

"You'll just have to take your chances," said Smiley laconically. "After all, this is MI5." *(Surely M&S? Ed.)*

Smirnoff slid the socks across the cool formica counter towards Smiley.

"I'm sorry," said the bespectacled ex-Masterspy with the faintest hint of a smile. "We appear to be out of size 11 in the grey."

"Damn you people! — You've double-crossed me again!" barked the furious tourist from *(cont. p. 94)*

"Look Maureen — it's Jeff and Lisa!"

Those Carey/Pope John-Paul discussions in full

Carey: Greetings, Your Holiness.

Pope: Buon giorno, Signor Inglese.

Carey: Our hope is that our two great churches can move into ever closer union.

Pope: Super corpus meum, amicus. Detestemus ordinationem feminarum.

Carey: I think, er, in these times of moral uncertainty...

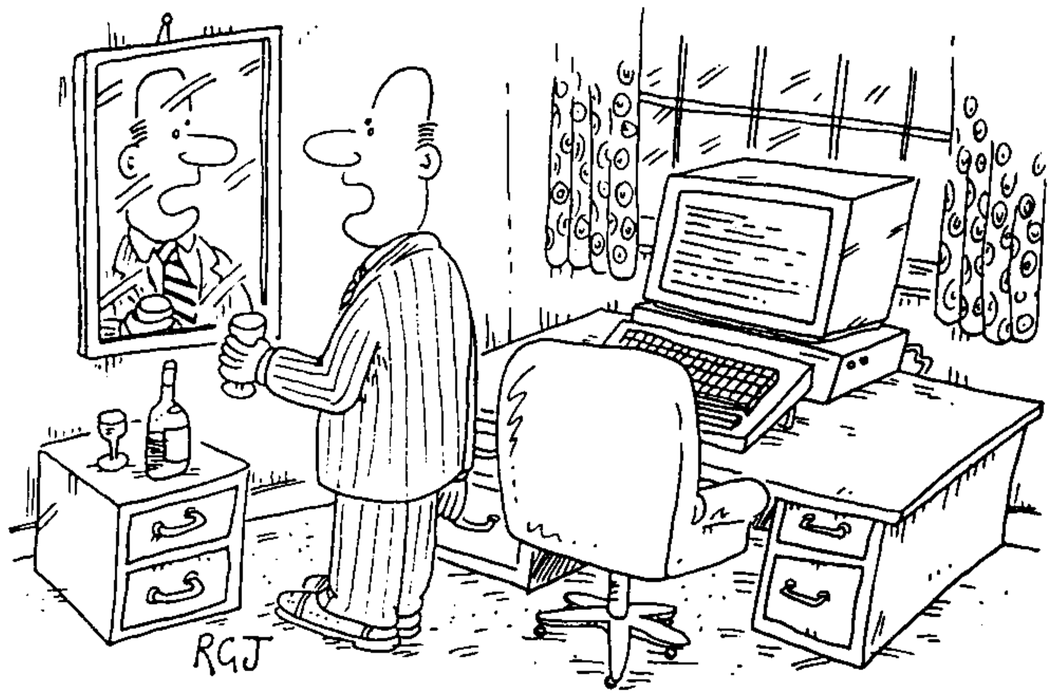
Pope: Abominatione, sodomistici et lesbiani in duomo santo di Southwark *(spits on floor)*. Tutti frutti.

Carey: Thank you very much, Your Holiness, for these reassurances. We go forward together.

Harry Enfield's **Class Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath**

2. The problem of crime

"The crime rate round here, right, it's a fuckin' disgrace. Jennerwadd I'm sayin'? All the break-ins on this estate, right, it's just all kids nicking the videos innit? Jennerwadd I'm sayin'? I mean, if the Council'd give the kids videos they wouldn't have to nick 'em would they? Jennerwadd I'm sayin'? I mean, when my Dale's thirteen he's gonna get some tart up the duff right and the Council'll give the bitch a flat and when the kid's two or something you need to stick it in front of the video all day but will the Council give you a video? Will they FUCK! I mean they'll give you a flat but they won't even give you a video! The other day Dale nicked a video and when he's plugged it in it's got a tape of hard core porn some blonde bird with three blokes now I don't want my kid watching that stuff till he's 12. I mean it's a fuckin' disgrace, no wonder this country's goin' to the dogs. Jennerwadd I'm sayin'?"



"I don't know, office parties just haven't been the same since I started working from home"

LATE NEWS

SCOTT'S TRAGIC END AFTER FAILING TO REACH SOUTH KEN

THE epic journey of one gallant Englishman has ended in tragic failure, it has been reported.

The legendary Sir Nicholas Scott has failed by only a few votes to become the first extremely drunk Englishman to be selected as MP for Kensington and Chelsea.

For months Scott battled against the odds in his ill-fated attempt to reach the poll without the use of legs.

Yesterday, as a nation mourned, hundreds of tributes poured in from colleagues and friends.

Said one Cabinet minister, "Don't quote me, old boy, but he had it coming to him."

(Reuters)

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

BLONDE WOMAN IN LOVE SPLIT SHOCK WITH MAN

by Our International News Staff **Phil Space**

A BLONDE woman has today sensationally either split up from the man she married or got back together with him. Or neither.

The happy or unhappy couple were last night seen leaving a smart restaurant together or separately or with some other people.

Friends of the couple said: "It doesn't surprise us at all. We knew that they were having problems or that they were always made for each other, whichever it is."

The couple called Pammy and Tommy or Mick and Jerry or Sherry and Gazza, or something similar have agreed to consult lawyers or marriage guidance counsellors or newspapers as they try to save or destroy their marriage.

The man has sworn that he will give up drink, drugs and other women or that he won't. The blonde woman has accepted this or finally had enough of him and chucked him out, so *(continued in all newspapers ad nauseam)*

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

A HARD DAY'S WORK WITH TAMARA BECKWITH:
SO YOU WANT ME TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE, YA?
I'LL EXPECT TWENTY GRAND ON ARRIVAL, YA?
OKAY DARLING. LOOK FORWARD TO IT. CIAO!
WHO WAS THAT?
DADDY. I'VE BEEN INVITED FOR SUNDAY LUNCH.

From The Referendum Bunker

Bulletin No. 94

Achtung!

So, Mr Bond, I have to admire your persistence, if nothing else.

But you are foolish to fight on, in the face of overwhelming odds. Some might call it courage. I prefer to call it boneheaded stupidity. *(Strokes White Paper on Maastricht 2)* As you may have seen from every newspaper in the land, I have at last unveiled my secret weapon which will destroy you and your party for ever.

It is the coup de grace that all true Englishmen have been waiting for, if you will pardon my French, Mr Major-Bond.

Do your famous "O" Levels stretch to understanding three little words in a foreign language? I think not.

I, on the other hand, Monsieur Sir Jams Goldfish, speak no fewer than 100 languages perfectly, including Martian. I have a house there, you know. You must come and visit me sometime.

But I had forgotten. We have other plans for you, do we not, Mr Taki?

(Swarthy Greek factotum in tennis gear sycophantically throws himself into tank of killer ants, provided by John Antspinall, chairman of "Keep Britain Mad", Madstone, Kent)

But time is running out, Mr Bond. Let me just show you the question which is going to decide your fate. *(Enter sultry Italian temptress wearing white rubber mini-skirt and white baby sealskin boots)* Carla, show our visitor the question.

(Huge screen appears, surrounded by flashing lights and lasers. A Dalek-style voice intones the question as it flashes up on screen)

"Do you think that Britain should have a referendum to decide whether there should be a referendum?"

No, Carla, that was the earlier question. You are beautiful but foolish. Give me the new question, at once, or I will kill you.

(New question appears accompanied by the Ride of the Valkyries)

"Do you think Britain should be ruled

a) by a lot of faceless, unelected, dictatorial, mad bureaucrats in Brussels or

b) me."

Clue: The answer begins with 'm' and ends with 'e'!

So, you see, Mr Major-Bond, it is all so easy, when you know how. I would like to have wished you a happy Christmas. But sadly you will have a very unhappy one. Cold shark is a poor substitute for roast turkey, heh, heh, heh.

(Sir Jimmy Goldrush climbs aboard private Eurostar train and vanishes beneath Channel Tunnel in puff of smoke)

Issued by the Referendum Party of Great Britain

(Theme tune to this advertisement, "Loonraker", was sung by Johann Sebastian Bacharach)

Literary Review

Books Of The Year

IT's no good trying to keep your wits about you when you're heading into Christmas. It's a time for tradition, a time for sentiment, a time for getting blind drunk so you don't die of embarrassment.

Experienced books of the year contributors understand this. While a few novices and killjoys try to reform the seasonal festivities by stopping multiple entries, logrolling, favour-currying and grudge-bearing, the old hands just sail on serenely, year after year, celebrating away.

Literary editors love the continuity — largely because these features are done *gratis* and are hugely pleasing to the suits on the eleventh floor. (*Times* contributors, so the fearful rumour goes, were instructed to choose items stocked by messrs Dillons as a means of cementing a promotional link-up.) Their contributors, meanwhile, relish both the cachet of being asked ("Darling, what *shall* I put in?") and the opportunity to cosy up to chums, whether real, imagined or potential.

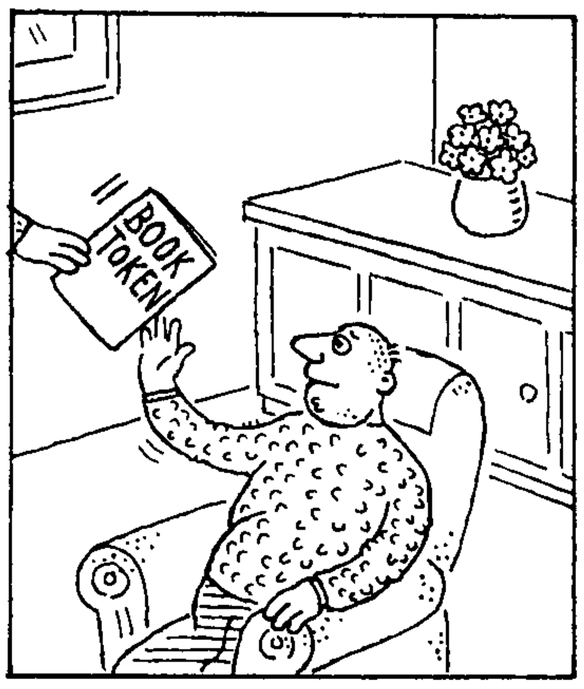
What would a Books of the Year be, without Barbara Cartland choosing either herself or her little pal, Christopher Hibbert? Last year she chose *Nelson*, "my favourite book by our brilliant historian, Christopher Hibbert", for both the *Independent* and for the *Sunday Times*. This year she cleverly chose *Nelson* by Christopher Hibbert ("a brilliant historian") once again, for the *Daily Telegraph* (the paperback is currently remaindered at Dillons at £3.99, if you're interested).

The *Oldie* meanwhile found Carmen Callil waxing lyrical over Hermione Lee's massive life of Virginia Woolf, while somehow forgetting to mention that she herself (prior to quitting Chatto & Windus) actually commissioned the book. The *Sunday Times*, alternatively, brought us Kazuo Ishiguro commending *Last Orders* by his good friend Graham Swift.

Of course if JG Ballard *didn't* find a way of pushing Will Self and Martin Amis once again; if John Mortimer *didn't* suck up to Muriel Spark, and John Carey bore on about Seamus Heaney, you'd soon miss them — you would, you know.

And could you even be sure it was Christmas if D.J. Taylor didn't pop up proclaiming the latest volume of Gissing *Letters* to be his book of the year once more? In the *Sunday Times* for 1993, when they'd only reached Volume 4, he was already telling us they were "an annual treat". This year in the *Spec* he was warmly commending Volume 8. Remember, nobody actually likes mulled wine either.

Moreover, will Malcolm Bradbury ever be too ashamed (or just plain weary) to puff the ghastly graduates of his University of East Anglia Writing School one more

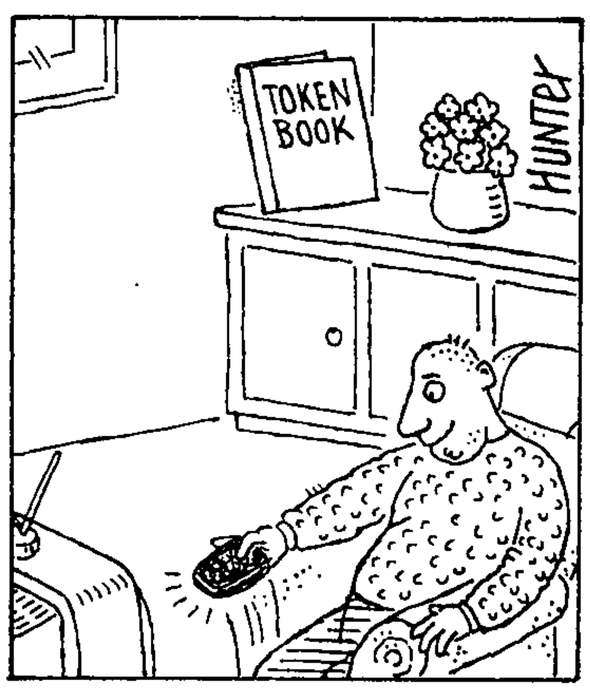


time? Of course not — no more than Santa Claus is going to be too shagged to come down the chimney. There he was in the *Independent* going it again: "Not surprisingly, I read work by former members of the University of East Anglia MA course in Creative Writing with special, avaricious interest: a gratifying year." And off he went, commending Clive Sinclair and a pair of "brilliant debuts".

It is particularly sweet when there's a divine reciprocity, or, to put it another way, you both come together. In the *Sunday Times* on 24 November, Sir Roy Strong made Lady Antonia Fraser's *The Gunpowder Plot* his top choice: "History as it should be written: meticulously researched in the best academic sense, yet accessible through a fluent literary style". The same day in the *Sunday Telegraph*, Antonia Fraser chose Roy Strong's *The Story of Britain*: "a deserved triumph for one man's splendid campaign to preserve the excitement and poetry of history". Darling, we were wonderful! Not of course that Fraser forgot to praise Edna O'Brien, another pal, too, in a couple of papers.

In the *Sindy*, one pompous bore, Peter Hennessy, praised another, Ben Pimlott. *The Queen* is likely to "dominate the (serious) monarchy shelves for a long time" apparently. A few column inches further on, there, as luck would have it, Ben Pimlott chose Peter Hennessy's crasher, *Muddling Through: Power Politics and the Quality of Government in Postwar Britain*, which in his completely disinterested opinion, is "fresh and pertinent".

'Course, it's not always so easy. A.N. Wilson has been puffing away for Beryl Bainbridge's sink-the-Titanic tale, *Every Man for Himself*, ever since it came out. Choosing the Christmas books of the year in the *Standard* all by himself, so as not to let his readers be confused by any second opinions, Wilson again called



it a classic. Poor Beryl! For, unluckily, Wilson had himself published a novel this year, the fifth in an underwhelming sequence. But Bainbridge is no faint heart. She grasped the nettle like a soldier and chose the book in the *Guardian*. "Not an easy read," she accidentally admitted, "but a superb evocation of literary London, old age and lost love."

Fat lady Jennifer Paterson went about it in a much more professional way. In the *Spectator*, before frankly choosing herself à la Winterson ("Quite the best cookbook of the year. Buy it!"), she was careful to praise first Bainbridge and then Wilson ("simple, beautiful ability," don't you know?) So Wilson duly chose her back in the *Standard*. "Jennifer has even been kind enough to include my own receipt (as she calls it) for lamb and bean stew," he simpered. Sometimes it just seems a pity that any member of the ordinary

Give your child a head start..
New grammer book
"Words Words Words"
Doreen Van-Cauter M.A.
! IDEAL XMAS GIFT ONLY £5.00 plus P+P !
St Albans Review

book-buying public should get in the way of these fondlings, doesn't it?

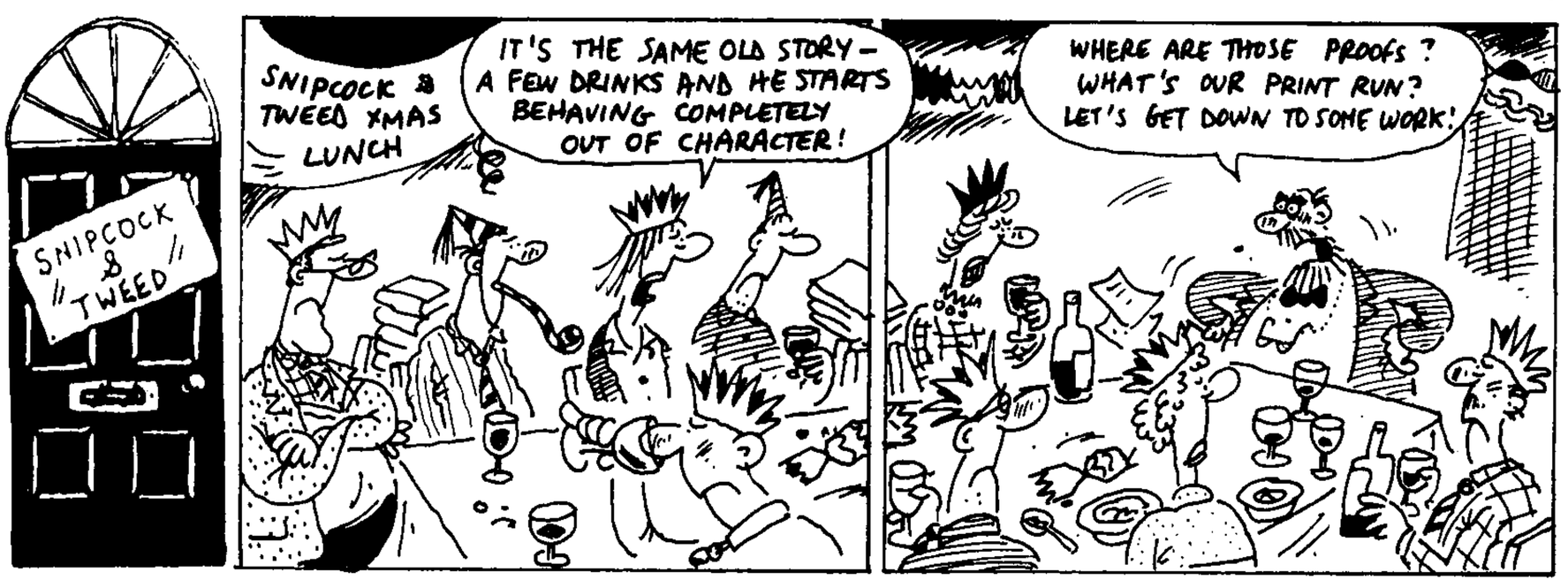
What business is it of ours that Alan Hollinghurst still wants to suck up to his tutor, John Fuller, in the *TLS* ("Mozartian in abundance, versatility, brilliance and depth"). Or that in the *Sindie* Galen Strawson didn't let down his Oxford and *TLS* pal Redmond O'Hanlon? They're just saving on stamps for their season's greetings, that's all.

For advanced players, you can go back a year or two and make the game even more intriguing. For example, last year Jonathan Raban chose Richard Ford's *Independence Day* in the *Observer* ("one of the glories of modern American writing"). That's a help in knowing why this year Ford chose Raban's *Bad Land* ("a scintillating book") in the *TLS*.

But why not keep it simple? The only people choosing therapist Adam Phillips's pitiful aphorisms *Monogamy* this year were in the *Observer* where, strange to say, Phillips made his own choice. Could Hanif Kureishi and Will Self actually be patients? Anyway, Self's encomium was a leading contender for the pseud of the year prize. *Monogamy*, he said, had annoyed "people who didn't read its banjaxed aphorisms as they were intended: namely, as the equivalent of Buddhist koans for the genitally-fixated generation".

Traditionally, since the death of Anthony Burgess, the pseud prize has gone to Gilbert Adair and he too put on a good show this year, introducing his selection of science books by saying: "To the best of my recollection, I have read no new English-language fiction at all this year; the novel may not be dead, but my taste for, and indeed tolerance of, it is now utterly beyond resurrection." Get him! Yet in the end, the winner in this category, among many strong entries in the *TLS*, was a certain Orhan Pamuk, who began with the instantly memorable line: "Finally, *Ulysses* is in Turkish!"

Indeed, the *TLS*'s "International Books of the Year" feature was a delightful catch-all. Everything you might expect was there. Robert Conquest saluted *Journals 1987-1989* by his old friend Anthony Powell; several idlers nodded their heads over items published in 1995 and 1994; while Gabriel Josipovici trumped everyone by plumping for a work written in around 700BC (the *Iliad*, natch). Mostly, of course, books of the year selections are just sad, domestic revelations of the limited sympathies most people have with anybody other than themselves. Women — like Michèle Roberts — choose books by women, Scots choose Scottish books, Irish Irish books, gays gay books, and Susie Orbach books by therapists, while sex-mad Lucretia Stewart, the *Punch* literary editor ha ha ha, chooses a sex novel not published here ("the story of an intensely sexual affair... it has an enviable freshness and rich sensuality"). Z-z-z-z-z...


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
SNIPCOCK & TWEED XMAS LUNCH
IT'S THE SAME OLD STORY – A FEW DRINKS AND HE STARTS BEHAVING COMPLETELY OUT OF CHARACTER!
WHERE ARE THOSE PROOFS? WHAT'S OUR PRINT RUN? LET'S GET DOWN TO SOME WORK!

footnotes

HMSOS!

BOB'S YOUR BOSS: Mr Thian

IN THE fortnight before the whole Budget was leaked for the first time in British history, all employees at the former government publishers HMSO, now the privatised Stationary Office, got two letters from their new chief executive, Bob Thian.

The first (on 7 November) was a "progress report" in which he enthused on the "underlying quality of our people". The second (on 21 November) announced the sacking of 900 people of underlying quality — about half the total workforce — by the end of the year.

In his report Mr Thian referred to himself as a former group chief executive of North West Water, "growing sales from £450 to £925 million in four years". There was no mention made of any of the following facts about Mr Thian's time at North West Water, which many employees there still remember with affection:

● The £28,000 spent on panelling in his office.

● His use of a brand new company Mercedes.

● The expensive carpet, glamorously embossed with the company logo, which graced the floors of North West Water's new Warrington headquarters.

● The over-run of costs on the building of the headquarters from a budgeted £500,000 to more than £1.5m.

● His stormy and controversial resignation in 1993 caused by other directors' desire to "temper an overseas expansion programme pushed through by Mr Thian".

● His even more controversial pay-off of £398,400 after less than four years with the company.

● The share options he took with him, valued at £276,000.

Mr Thian also enthused about the new Stationary Office chairman, Rupert Pennant-Rea, who was described as a "former deputy governor of the Bank of England" — without bothering to mention Mr Pennant-Rea's embarrassing departure from that high office after revelations about a steamy office love affair.

Mr Thian went on to inform those workers lucky enough to keep their jobs that the "financing of the bid for the Stationary Office" was arranged by Electra Fleming, which he described as an "independent, international investment management company". There was no mention of the enormous contributions of the two partners in the company, the merchant bank Robert Fleming and Electra Investment Trust, to the Conservative party.

The *Eastern Daily Press*, which is based in Norwich, home of the former HMSO, revealed recently that since 1979 the two firms contributed £567,000 to the Tories, and plan a vast contribution in election year. Robert Fleming is advised (for a fee of £20,000 a year) by Tory MP and former foreign office minister Tim Renton, while Tory MP Tom King, former defence minister and a guardian of the standards of public life on the Nolan commission, sits on the board of Electra Investment Trust PLC.

So too does Lord (Nigel) Vinson, who, in his ideological days at the Centre for Policy Studies, pioneered the government plan to persuade people out of occupational schemes and into private pensions (a brilliant wheeze which swindled half a million people out of some four billion pounds). The Centre for Policy studies has also had hefty contributions from Fleming.

PS: Stationary Office employees were reported to have burst into tears of gratitude to Mr Thian and his board for sending them each by hand a recent issue of the newsletter of something called *Working Partners*. The newsletter offers "support during this difficult period", chiefly by advising sacked workers how to apply for pensions and/or write out applications for new jobs.

Janet and Job

■ **CHRIS WOODHEAD, the telegenic chief inspector of schools and head of Ofsted, the government's schools inspectorate, played an important role in the appointment of his long-standing and close friend Janet Brennan as a fellow HM inspector (HMI) after she failed to get the job for which she was interviewed.**

The position of HMI, one of the most senior in all education, is much coveted by educationists. No new HMI was appointed between 1990 and 1996. In a prepared statement, an Ofsted spokesman told the *Eye*:

"Ofsted advertised for new HMIs in April 1996. The vacancies included three specialist adviser posts for English, mathematics and religious education. Following a readvertisement in June, Janet Brennan applied for the English post. Candidates were then interviewed by a board. The post went to an existing HMI. Janet Brennan, however, passed the board, which meant that she was considered highly suitable as an HMI. Having taken up her references, Ofsted offered her an HMI vacancy in the education team which she accepted. Because of the current focus on literacy in primary schools, the team needed further expertise in English. By offering the post to Janet, whose experience and qualifications fitted her ideally for the post, Ofsted avoided the need for further advertising at public expense. Her appointment was approved by the civil service commission."

CHRIS WOODHEAD

The spokesman agreed that Woodhead and Brennan had been close friends for 20 years. She was his pupil at teachers' training college in Oxford in the late 1970s. She worked for many years as an adviser for primary school English at Devon county council. In 1990-91 Woodhead was deputy head of education in Cornwall. Janet Brennan recently bought Woodhead's delightful country retreat at Morvah in west Cornwall.

The spokesman confirmed that Mr Woodhead was one of the three members of the panel that appointed Janet Brennan. When she did not get the advertised job she'd applied for, she was promptly appointed to another one which was not advertised. This was, said the spokesman, "the sensible, logical and indeed educational thing to do". The *Eye* asked if Mr Woodhead had left the interview panel while his close friend was being interviewed. The spokesman replied: "No, because he wasn't chairman of the board, nor did he write the report of the board. He said to the two other board members: `Look, I know this woman. She is a friend. I leave it to you to make the decision.' And they were both perfectly clear that she was ideally suited for the vacancy, and so they confirmed the appointment."

He added: "He knows her. She knows him. So what? He knows nearly everybody in education, which is a small world."

THE MET TIGHTENS

■ **FOR THE second time in their investigation of allegations made by their former colleague John Gorman, the Metropolitan police have been forced to mount a fresh inquiry.**

This follows a statement from British Telecom's anti-nuisance tracing unit that an abusive telephone call made to Gorman in September last year was traced to British Airways, and that Enfield police had been informed about the trace.

JOHN GORMAN

The abusive call told Gorman he had disobeyed previous warnings not to attend British Airways' annual conference and would now "pay the price". The price Gorman actually paid was £2,600, when his car was vandalised a few weeks later by hooligans who scraped on it with an iron bar the mysterious words: NO WIN — BA.

Enfield police took no action on the BT report. This inertia annoyed the police complaints authority (PCA), who promptly took the investigation away from Enfield and passed it on to officers at Belgravia. Two senior officers from the Met police complaints branch have recently told Gorman that the threatening call has been traced to the second floor of British Airways' administration building in London's Victoria. Access to this floor is possible only for those with special swipe cards. The 16 staff there with these swipe cards are now to be interviewed under caution.

STAGG HUNTING: 3

The Cooked Report

LATEST to join the media lynch mob to convict Colin Stagg of the murder of Rachel Nickell is Central Television's great investigator, Roger Cook.

The *Cook Report* on 26 November devoted its whole half hour to putting the case against Colin Stagg, who has already been acquitted of the murder. The great investigator turned himself into grand inquisitor, sticking closely to the prosecution case without a word about the case for Stagg's defence (see *Eye* 910).

The high point of the programme was a lie detector test, in which 62 questions were asked of Stagg about the murder and two days were spent analysing the results. When the adjudicator came back with the verdict: "Categorically Colin Stagg did not kill Rachel Nickell", the programme fell flat on its face. Instead of dropping it, or at least conceding Stagg's innocence, Cook continued: "We took him [Stagg] to a hypnotist used by many doctors who told us he'd resisted all attempts to induce hypnosis." That seemed damning. Stagg was not asked to comment on it. More curiously, the hypnotist was not shown or named, even though advance publicity for the programme had named him as Derek Crussell, of south London.

DEREK CRUSSELL

Mr Crussell advertises in the Yellow Pages as an "expert in past life regression". He tells the *Eye* that this form of hypnosis "takes people back" to their past lives. One patient he'd hypnotised had, he said, regressed to a past life as a pickpocket in Victorian times, and another as an auctioneer's daughter who poisoned her husband with flypaper and was hanged. "I've got a chap now who goes back as a British agent in the desert blowing up things." Did he himself think that all these past lives were real? "Well, it's all very vivid," he replied, "but I would rather reserve judgement on that."

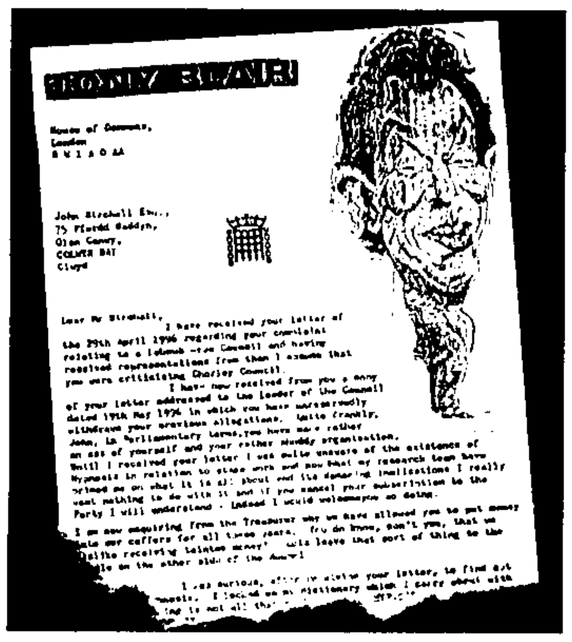
Mr Crussell said the *Cook Report* team had brought Stagg to his house, set up their cameras and provided questions "to try to take him back" to the day of the murder. "But I couldn't hypnotise him," he says. "He just did not want to be hypnotised".

The *Cook Report*'s whole treatment of the subject, is utterly rejected by Michael Heap, a clinical psychologist at Sheffield University who lectures on hypnosis and has written a book about it. He tells the *Eye*: "There is no evidence at all of a relationship between hypnosis and truth... Under hypnosis people are more, not less likely to fabricate. The police long ago were advised by the home office never to use hypnosis in their inquiries."

Dr Heap says that any attempt to implicate someone in a crime because of what he says or does not say under hypnosis is "grossly unethical". So was the programme's statement that Stagg had "resisted" hypnosis. "You just can't say that," Heap insisted. "There are a number of reasons why someone does not respond to hypnosis."

Dr Heap is not impressed by Mr Crussell, who has no qualifications in any recognised therapeutic or academic profession. Heap's view is shared by John Birchall, a stage hypnotist from North Wales. For years Crussell has waged war on stage hypnotists. He advised Chorley council, in Lancashire, which recently banned stage hypnosis. John Birchall, a Labour party supporter, wrote to Tony Blair to protest about the ban.

A week later he got a letter, ostensibly from Blair's office in the House of Commons, illustrated by a cartoon of Blair and the portcullis which adorns official Commons notepaper. The letter was an hysterical rant against "you and your shoddy


TONY BLAIR

House of Commons,
London
SW1A 0AA

John Birchall Esq.,
75 Pleasant Gardens,
Olton Covery,
COLWYN BAY
Clwyd

Dear Mr Birchall,

I have received your letter of the 25th April 1996 regarding your complaint relating to a [illegible] view Council and having received representations from them I assume that you were criticising Chorley Council.

I have now received from you a copy of your letter addressed to the Leader of the Council dated 19th May 1996 in which you have unreasonably withdrawn your previous allegations. Quite frankly, John, in Parliamentary terms, you have made a rather an ass of yourself and your rather shoddy organisation.

Until I received your letter I was quite unaware of the existence of Hypnosis in relation to crime work and now that my research team have arrived at on what is at all about and its damaging implications I really want nothing to do with it and if you cancel your subscription to the Party I will understand. Indeed I would welcome an decline.

I am now enquiring from the Treasurer why we have allowed you to get money into our coffers for all these years. You do know, don't you, that we [illegible] the receiving Labour money' will leave that sort of thing to the [illegible] on the other side of the house!

FORGERY: The bogus letter to Tony Blair

organisation". Blair's office deny sending any such letter, which is an obvious forgery. Birchall thinks it must have been written by Crussell. The typewriter used seems exactly the same as Crussell's and the letter was posted in south London. "He was one of a tiny handful of people who knew I'd written to Tony Blair," says Birchall. Crussell flatly denies the forgery, which must therefore remain a mystery. But as soon as he read the advance publicity about Crussell's appearance on the programme, Birchall sent Roger Cook a copy of the forgery and recounted its history. This could explain why Crussell did not appear on the programme and was not named in it.

The *Eye* has made prodigious attempts to ask the *Cook Report* why it selected Crussell and why he was not named, but the normally loquacious investigator and his team appear to have been struck dumb.

BUST TO BUSES

■ WHEN Stephen Norris, the fun-loving former transport minister who can't afford to live on an MP's salary, finally announced he would be joining the road haulage industry for a huge salary, many of his admirers assumed that was the end of his much-publicised negotiations with Capital Citybus, a London bus company his ministry had privatised.

Not so, apparently. Mr Norris tells the *Eye*: "I have talked to them about a job. They were very kind to offer me something. I was very flattered. I know the company and like them. We think along the same lines, but I accept the recommendations of the Carlisle Committee that I should not take up the post until January. So it is simply not a decision to be made until January."

If Nr Norris quickly becomes a millionaire in his new jobs, his career will become strangely similar to that of another fun-loving former Tory MP, Jeffrey Archer. In the 1970s Archer, a young ambitious MP for Louth, was desperate to make a killing, so he borrowed a huge sum to invest in an unlikely new anti-pollution valve for motor cars. The valve turned out to be a gigantic swindle and Archer was forced to leave parliament to make his fortune outside.

Twenty years later, Stephen Norris, a young ambitious MP for Epping Forest, was desperate to make a killing, so he invested most of his considerable fortune in a Scottish company called Glentronic. The company, he writes in his recent autohagiography, "was formed to break into a new high-tech market for a special form of equipment which controlled the speed of electric motors". What happened? "In a nutshell," writes Norris, "the product never worked". The company went bust and poor Norris has to leave parliament to make his fortune all over again.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

1. THE BAN.
"The National Health Service and its constituent bodies have no party political affiliation. Nothing should be said or done by any board member in his or her official capacity that suggests otherwise."

NHS Executive regulation (1995) 93.

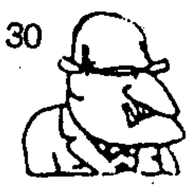
2. THE EXCEPTION.
"The Conservative NHS Network brings together not only medical and nursing professionals but also everyone else who works in and around the NHS in support of the NHS reforms..During the general election the Network will play a vital role in marshalling support for the NHS and assisting Conservative candidates with the information they need to win the arguments."

Stephen Dorrell, secretary of state for health, in a recent personal message to local Tory parties about the newly-formed Conservative "Good News" network.

PS: In a recent Commons debate on the health service, opposition spokesman Chris Smith named four top Tories appointed to key positions on health trusts, all of whom will act as regional organisers for the Conservative NHS Network during the election campaign. They are Mrs Audrey Collins MBE, chair of South Tees Acute hospital; Charles Bunker, an accountant who is a director of the East Herts NHS Trust; Mrs Mary Firth, who chairs Oldham Hospital and Community Services; and Mrs Susan Wigley, who chairs the North Yorkshire Health Authority. All four will be making absolutely sure no member of staff says a word against government policy on the NHS (that's political propaganda) while seizing every opportunity to speak up for Tory policy on the NHS (that's good news).

CHARLES BUNKER

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183



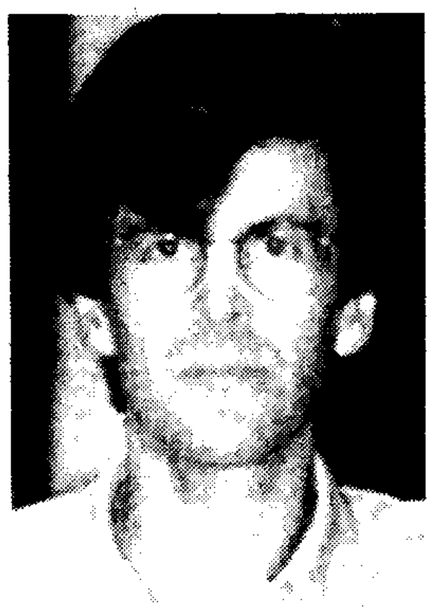
In the City

ALL THOSE jars of gherkins and Polaroid snaps of playtime with Sandra and Tracy may yet save sacked Morgan Grenfell fund manager Peter Young from an inspector calling.

Far from being the subject of City jokes, along with several other examples of eccentric behaviour, the gherkins and Polaroids could be exhibits in a move by Young and his lawyers to halt any prosecution over the £180 million-plus black hole he created at Morgan Grenfell while diverting substantial sums to offshore accounts.

Sources close to the Serious Farce Office and IMRO investigations suggest that moves may be under way to declare Young not bad but mad and therefore unfit to stand trial. His actions, it may be claimed, are the result not of dishonesty but acute stress and mental breakdown due to pressures of work and demands to perform — at the office that is.

The first move in such a strategy could be to invite the SFO not to proceed against Young on the grounds of his mental state now and at the time he was pouring Morgan clients' cash into unlisted or highly speculative investments behind a maze of Luxembourg letter boxes. Such suggestions are not uncommon in criminal cases before charges are brought. Such a ploy requires a psychiatrist's report producing evidence that Young is mentally unfit to stand the stress of a trial or even an interview and was not responsible for his previous actions.



YOUNG: Not bad, but mad

Certainly a lot of ground work has been laid for such a medical move almost from the day the Young bomb went off inside Morgan Grenfell last September. Within days we learned, from his loyal wife Harmanna, about Peter's curious behaviour while indulging in a £100 million plus investment binge. Not only had he purchased 30 jars of gherkins to feed the family of four but he had taken to sitting in darkened rooms.

Then there was his increasingly bizarre behaviour at the office. He talked of designs for a rocket launcher and created a mathematical model mimicking the burrowing of termites! When confronted by evidence of his flagrant breaches of fund rules, "Polaroid" admitted to those questioning him that he "sometimes felt strange".

This was followed by the discovery of a bulk order of condoms in his desk, porn videos and lingerie in his garage and, finally, the emergence of Sandra and Tracy with their (sadly still banned) tale of what they did to the fun manager and what he did to them, with and without his camera, during numerous visits last year.

As if that were not enough, "Polaroid" himself now gives the definite impression to those who meet him that he may not be exactly 100p to the £. Whether this is a performance learned from studying at the Saunders School of Acting may soon become a matter for the men in white coats. But, as Saunders' miraculous recovery from Alzheimer's Disease (a medical first) proved, doctors are no more infallible than fund managers.

Meanwhile "Polaroid" is being kept away from anyone who might wish to put to him anything other than questions about his mental health. It is believed he has not been seen by either the SFO or IMRO investigators. Perhaps the clearest signal of what may be coming down.

Should the Saunders manoeuvre be employed, there is no necessity for the SFO to agree. Usually such medical ploys are resisted and independent tests demanded. As for IMRO, it is unlikely to be concerned as "Polaroid" will never work in the City again. But it could create a problem regarding any plans to prosecute those outside Morgan Grenfell who got rich helping Young to break the rules.

"ALZHEIMER", meanwhile, is about to have his date with destiny in Strasbourg at the European court of human rights. The court will pronounce next week on whether he was denied a fair trial because his interviews with the Department of Timidity & Inaction inspectors were made available to the SFO.

Which way the Strasbourg court will jump is far from clear. There are hints that it may back Saunders, as did the lower commission on human rights. There are also hints that it may agree with the British court of appeal last year that Saunders was fairly tried and more than fairly convicted.

The delay in pronouncing the verdict has been caused by the decision earlier in the year to use the largest panel of judges available rather than the normal core group of around half the 30 or so judges. Some legal observers saw this as a bid to ensure not just the weightiest opinion but also to perhaps tip the balance against Saunders.

There are also the politics to consider. Declaring Ernest Saunders innocent would be as convincing to most followers of the Guinness saga as accepting that acquittals made Kevin Maxwell and O.J. Simpson innocent. This is especially so after the resounding rejection of the Guinness Four's appeal last year by the then lord chief justice and his colleagues.

Given the European court's unpopularity with the British government over past rulings, Strasbourg may not want to give HMG the decision which forces the walk-out favoured by several ministers. Suggesting that "Alzheimer", after fooling the original court of appeal into halving his sentence, should now be declared innocent on a technicality and even compensated would rank right behind the Strasbourg ruling against Britain over the Gibraltar IRA shootings in terms of unpalatability.

What might satisfy everyone, other than Saunders, would be to say yes there was a technical breach of his human rights because he was forced to answer the DTI questions — not that he incriminated himself; how could he? He never admitted any wrongdoing! — but he was guilty as charged because of ample other evidence. Such a fudge would perhaps allow an award for costs but block any route back for "Alzheimer" to an unwelcoming court of appeal.

More challenging for the DTI will be what to do with the still awaited — after exactly 10 years this month — inspectors' report into the Guinness battle for Distillers which is at the heart of the Strasbourg case. The DTI is still saying it has not received the report. If true — which after 10 years and several million pounds raises questions of its own — that suggests no immediate publication. Showing characteristic courage the DTI would seem to be waiting on Saunders and any further appeal rather than ensuring any "Alzheimer" victory in Strasbourg is made instantly pyrrhic by publishing the verdict of those who know most about what Saunders and his gang of share supporters tried and untried, convicted and acquitted, did all those years ago.

THOSE who suggest justice and the law are too often a contradiction in fraud received further support from the second Brent Walker trial.

Former Goldcrest finance director Donald Anderson was convicted and jailed for two years for covering up that Brent Walker had inflated its profits with a bogus £19 million contribution from its film making subsidiary. Judge Michael Harris declared: "Others at Brent Walker were undoubtedly responsible for what happened." No doubt the judge had in mind Goldcrest boss John Quested (who pleaded guilty in 1993 and received a suspended sentence and fine), and former BW finance director Wilfred Aquilina (convicted of false accounting and also given a similar sentence).

But perhaps he had most in mind George Walker, the man who founded and ran Brent Walker and who always denied there were any bogus film profits. But while two juries convicted his loyal lieutenants, Walker was acquitted of all charges by jurors who believed the organ grinder but not the monkey.

Left unanswered, other than in the minds of judge Harris and the no doubt embittered Quested, Aquilina and Anderson, is who told them to invent and cover up the false profits?

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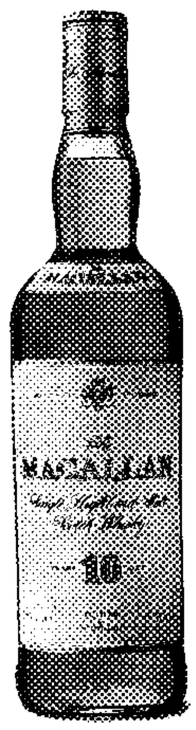

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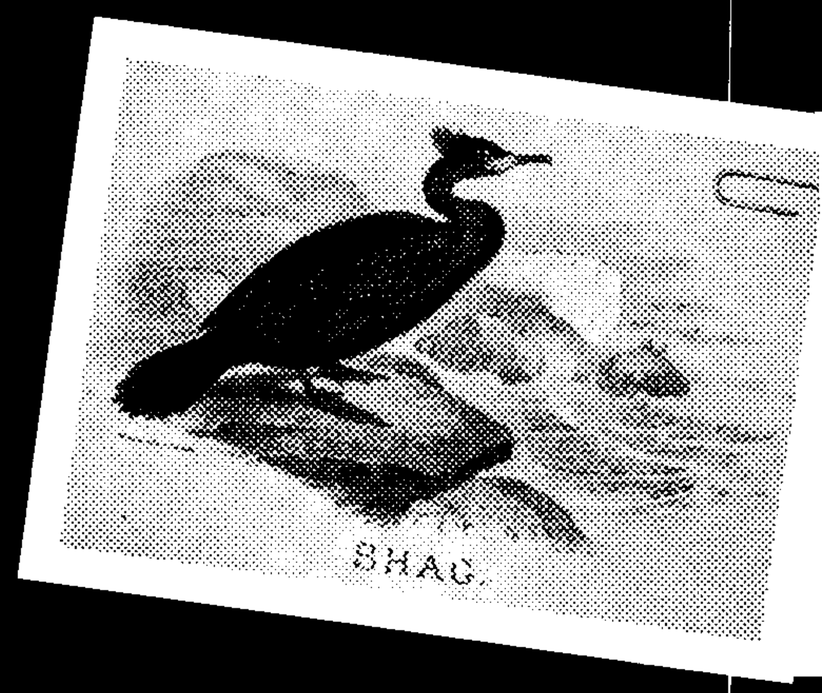

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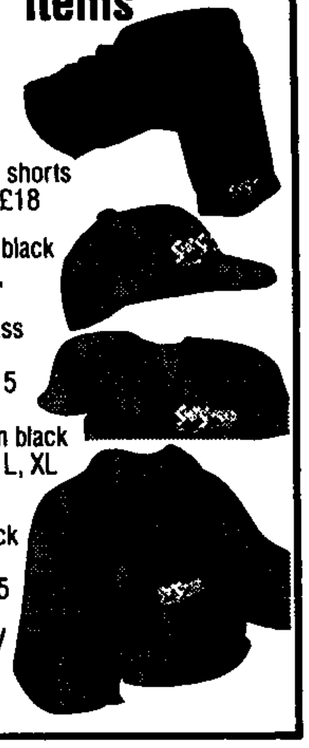

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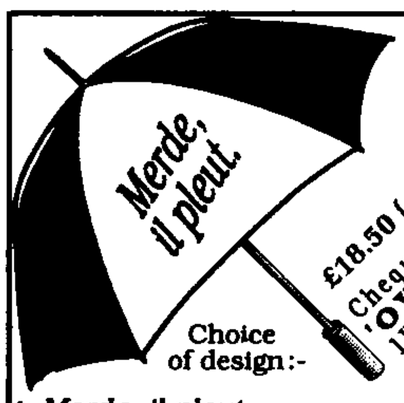

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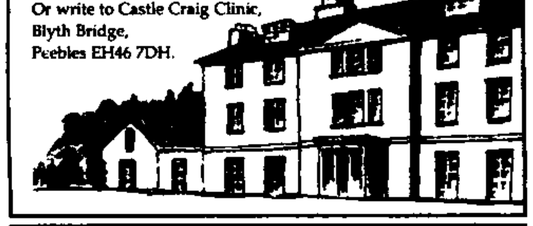

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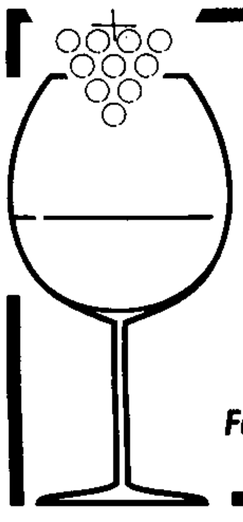

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PLEASE, PLEASE HELP! Halifax D/15269947-5. Grateful.

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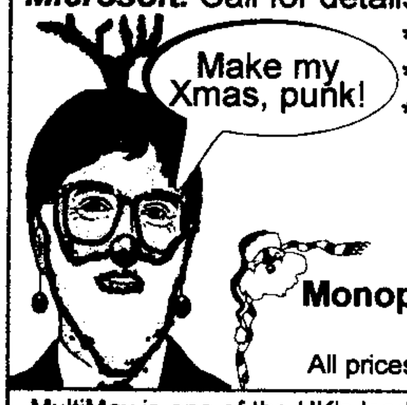

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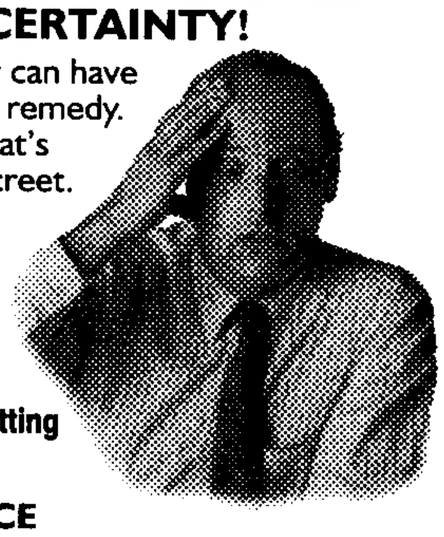

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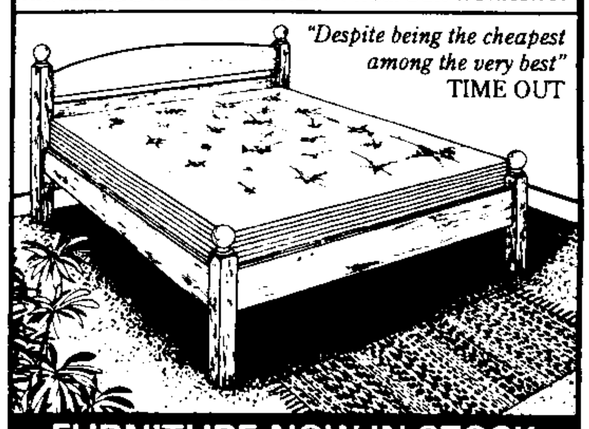

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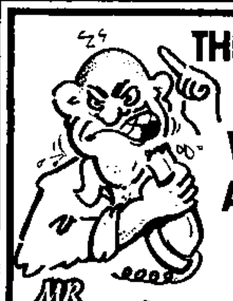

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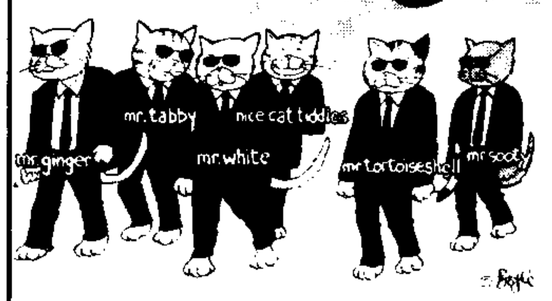

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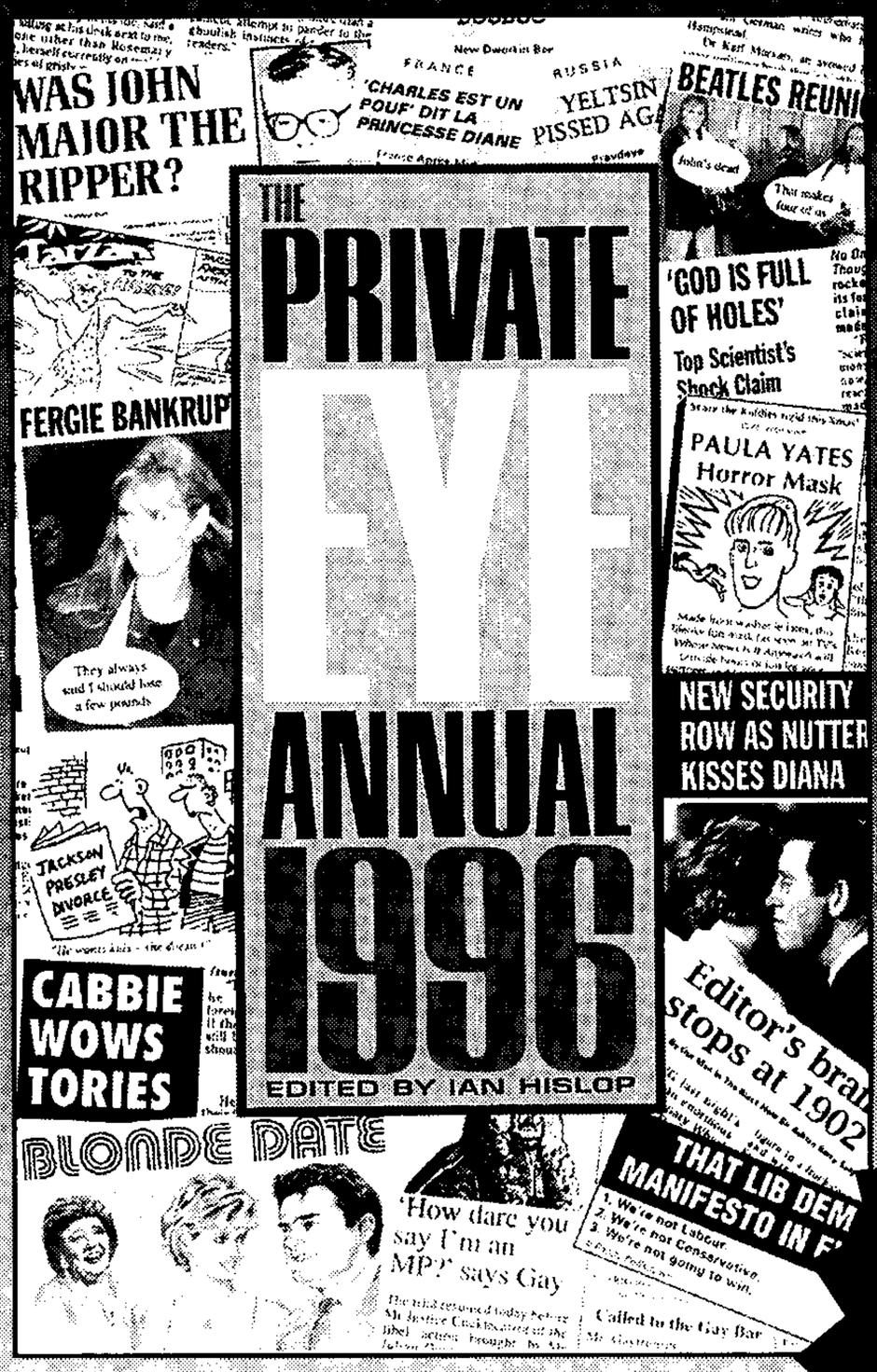
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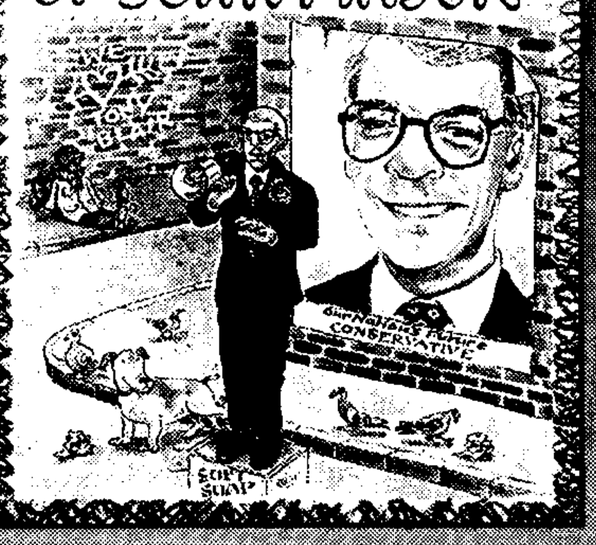

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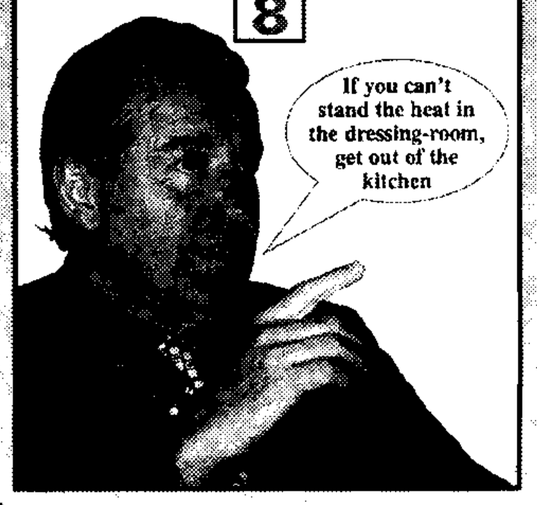

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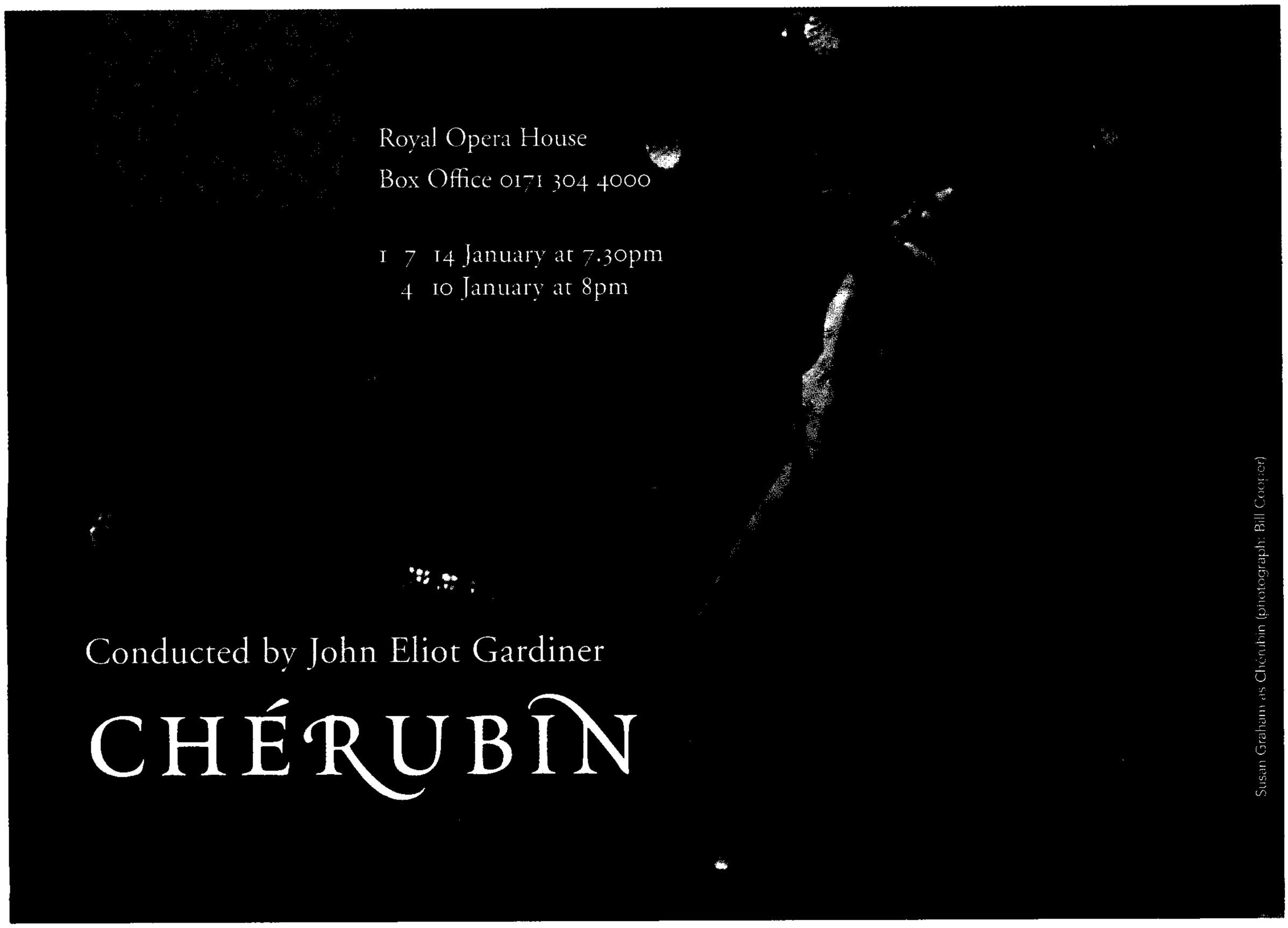

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